THE PLASTER TEXTS FROM KUNTILLET ‘AJRUD AND DEIR ‘ALLA

AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH TO THE EMERGENCE OF NORTHWEST SEMITIC LITERARY TEXTS IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM B.C.E.

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2015
They are proud and wilful, but they are true-hearted, generous in thought and deed; bold but not cruel; wise but unlearned, writing no books but singing many songs, after the manner of the children of Men before the Dark Years.

J. R. R. Tolkien, The Two Towers

But what if the traditional character of these structures was given more than lip service? What if traditional came actively to indicate extratextual? What if it came to refer to a reality larger than even the entire individual performance, or group of performances?

John Miles Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance

And on the pedestal these words appear:
“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Percy Shelley, Ozymandias
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the emergence of literary texts from the primarily oral milieux of the southern Levant during the first millennium B.C.E. The question of textualisation has received considerable attention in the last two decades, with particular emphasis given to the origins of the Hebrew Bible. But whereas earlier studies have tended to work heuristically—beginning at the level of the received biblical text and attempting to develop explanatory models—, the present study proceeds inductively—beginning with a particular instantiation of the phenomenon of literary text production, namely plaster wall inscriptions, and extrapolating conclusions based on these specific examples.

Working within the paradigm of an oral-literate continuum, the research focusses on two roughly contemporary case studies: the 8th century B.C.E. plaster texts from Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Deir ʿAlla. For both case studies detailed epigraphic and archaeological analyses are used to assess three core questions: What was written? Who was writing? And how were the texts experienced by their audiences?

It is concluded that in the physical context of the plaster inscriptions writing served both symbolic and memorialising functions, communicating specific information to posterity and serving as a form of communal self-identification and expression. Possible numinous associations of writing are also considered along the way.

The final section includes a discussion of implications for the origins of the biblical text. It is argued that by the end of the 8th century B.C.E. there is evidence for the textualisation of stories and songs comparable to those found in the Hebrew Bible, and that the impulse toward literary text production was shaped within a larger pool of folk-traditions.
Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the financial support of a MQRES scholarship from Macquarie University.

In addition, I thank the Sir Asher Joel Foundation for their generous financial support, in the form of the Sir Asher Joel scholarships that enabled me to travel to Israel in 2011 and 2012 in order to participate in excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath and Tel Azekah. This was an invaluable immersion in the praxis of archaeological fieldwork. I thank the Macquarie University department of Ancient History for the funding that allowed me to present parts of Chapter 2 at the Baltimore meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2013. I am also grateful for the grant awarded from the Macquarie University Postgraduate Research Fund, which enabled me to travel to Jordan and the Netherlands in 2014 in order to view the Deir 'Alla plaster texts, to visit Tell Deir 'Alla, and to meet with Dr. Gerrit van der Kooij. Special thanks also are due to British Institute in Amman for their generous hospitality and the use of their library facilities while in Amman, and to the Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten (NINO) library in Leiden for the use of their resources.

I would like to thank Gerrit van der Kooij and Lucas Petit for their generosity in taking the time to meet with me and answer my many questions while I was in Leiden, and Ze’ev Meshel for corresponding with me via email. It is also a pleasure for me to thank Associate Professor Biran B. Schmidt for his generosity in showing me advanced copies of two forthcoming articles.

Who can begin to express the debt we owe our teachers? To Elspeth Collins and Jack Shannon, who first instructed me in historical methodology and modelled for me what it means to work as a Christian historian, thank you. Your wisdom, humility, diligence, and integrity are my constant guide.

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To my beautiful wife Tamara, who has sacrificed so much to give me this opportunity, words cannot express the debt I owe you for your constant support and encouragement. I am truly blessed.

Finally, above all, to my supervisor Stephen Llewelyn, for whom I have the utmost respect and admiration, it would not be possible to find a wiser or more attentive mentor and teacher. Thank you for your profound insights, for your gentle corrections, for your patience, and for creating such an extraordinary research environment at Macquarie. Thank you also for first encouraging me to apply for a PhD, and for allowing me to pursue such an ambitious topic.
## Abbreviations

### Bibliographical

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<td>Annual of the Department of Antiquities Jordan</td>
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<td>AfO</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung</td>
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<td>AION</td>
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<td>AJSL</td>
<td>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</td>
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<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
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<td>CAL</td>
<td>Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon: <a href="http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/index.html">http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/index.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>CIS</td>
<td>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</td>
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<td>ConBOT</td>
<td>Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series</td>
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<td>CTU</td>
<td>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani,</td>
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<td>DJD</td>
<td>Discoveries in the Judean Desert</td>
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<td>Erlsr</td>
<td>Eretz-Israel</td>
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<td>Comptes Rendus du Groupe Linguistique d'Études Champéto-Semitées</td>
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<td>GUS</td>
<td>Gorgias Ugaritic Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACL</td>
<td>History, Archaeology and Culture of the Levant</td>
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<td>HO</td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary of the Old and New Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israel Exploration Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAEI</td>
<td>Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections</td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<td>JARCE</td>
<td>Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt</td>
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<td>JBQ</td>
<td>Jewish Bible Quarterly</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
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<td>JEA</td>
<td>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</td>
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<td>JHS</td>
<td>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</td>
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<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JQR</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSOTS</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KAT</strong></td>
<td>Kommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MGRLL</strong></td>
<td>Monographs on Greek and Roman language and literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NICOT</strong></td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NRSV</strong></td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NTS</strong></td>
<td><em>New Testament Studies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLO</strong></td>
<td><em>Porta Linguarum Orientalium</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OBO</strong></td>
<td><em>Orbis biblicus et orientalis</em></td>
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<td><strong>OIS</strong></td>
<td>Oriental Institute Seminars</td>
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<td><strong>OLA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>OT</strong></td>
<td><em>Oral Tradition</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RINAP</strong></td>
<td>The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period</td>
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<td><strong>SAA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SAIS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SBLRBS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SJOT</strong></td>
<td><em>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<td><strong>SPCK</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TynBul</strong></td>
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UF Ugarit-Forschungen
VT Vetus Testamentum
VTSup Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
Williams Williams’ Hebrew Syntax, ed. J. C. Beckman. 3rd ed.
Toronto, 2007
WMANT Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO Die Welt des Orients
WOSS Avigad and Sass, Corpus of West Semitic Seals
ZAH Zeitschrift für Althebräistik
ZAW Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDMG Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZDVP Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins
ZPE Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS, VERSIONS, AND ANCIENT TEXTS

Ant. Josephus’ Jewish Antiquities
Barb. Barberini Codex; the Barberini Greek version of Habakkuk
3
DSS Dead Sea Scrolls
Kajr Kuntillet ’Ajrud
LXX Septuagint
LXXA Codex Alexandrinus
LXXB Codex Vaticanus
MT Masoretic Text
MTA Aleppo Codex
MTL Leningrad Codex
papMur Papyrus manuscript from Wadi Murabba’at
hev manuscripts from Nahal Ḥever
Sam. Pent. Samaritan Pentateuch
Tg(s). Targum(s)
Tg. Jon. Targum Jonathan
Tg. Neof. Targum Neofiti
Tg. Onq. Targum Onqelos
Tg. Ps.-J. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Theod. Theodotion
Vulg. Vulgate

GENERAL

1. First person
2. Second person
3. Third person
adj. adjective
Akkad. Akkadian
Ammon. Ammonite
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<td>c.</td>
<td>common</td>
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<td>Deir ʿAlla Plaster Text</td>
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<td>Divine Name(s)</td>
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<td>esp.</td>
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<td>f.</td>
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<td>gent.</td>
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<td>IA</td>
<td>Imperial Aramaic</td>
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<td>idiom.</td>
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<td>Moabite</td>
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<td>Manuscript(s)</td>
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<td>OA</td>
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<td>obv.</td>
<td>obverse (front) of a tablet or stele</td>
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<td>pf.</td>
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<td>Phoenician</td>
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<td>plate</td>
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<td>PN(N)</td>
<td>Personal Name(s)</td>
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<td>repr.</td>
<td>reprint</td>
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<td>rev.</td>
<td>reverse (back) of a tablet or stele</td>
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<td>s.</td>
<td>singular</td>
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<td>Syr.</td>
<td>Syriac</td>
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<td>v(v).</td>
<td>verse(s)</td>
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**Sigla**

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<td>֮</td>
<td>Reconstructed letter</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Lacuna</td>
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<td>◦</td>
<td>Indecipherable sign</td>
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<td>Symbol</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>Equivalent to</td>
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<td>≈</td>
<td>Might equal; signifies one of several possible vocalisations</td>
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<td>*</td>
<td>Hypothetical form</td>
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<td>&lt; &gt;</td>
<td>Emendation</td>
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<td>{ }</td>
<td>Scribal correction</td>
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MAP SHOWING KUNTILLET ʿAJRUD AND DEIR ʿ ALLA
INTRODUCTION
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PHENOMENON OF TEXTUALISATION

1.1. THE PROBLEM OF TEXTUALISATION

Why would a functioning oral society choose to set its traditions in writing? In other words, what could impel the tradents of a living oral tradition to supplement conventional modes of memory and performance with a written text? It is by no means inevitable that they should do so. Even with the development of chirographic technologies sufficient for the requirements of complex administrative tasks and record keeping, it is not self-evident that writing should be used to transpose and transmit traditional performance-based genres (e.g. stories, songs, genealogies, etc.). As such, the phenomenon of textualisation—as it may be called—presupposes an abstracted use of writing that amounts to nothing less than a paradigmatic shift with regard to perceptions of folklore, and the potential of the written word. The purpose of the present study is to explore this phenomenon with reference to the primarily oral milieux of the Northwest Semitic cultures that inhabited the Southern Levant during the first millennium B.C.E.

1 As was observed by eminent folklorist and oral theorist, the late John Miles Foley, “[a]s folklorists have long known, the mere presence of some kind or level of literacy, established perhaps by an inscription or artifact, means next to nothing as evidence for or against oral or written communication in a given context or situation. Late-twentieth-century North Americans, many of them deeply engaged in intensely literate pursuits for most of their waking hours, also participate in oral traditions that may never have been textualized”; John Miles Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 72, and n.27 where he cites the examples of “folk preaching” and “tall tales”.
To the extent that it is bound to questions about the authority and reliability of sacred texts, the subject of textualisation holds particular significance for the study of the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament). It should be stated at the outset, however, that this is not a thesis about biblical origins, nor is it about orality and literacy in the ancient Near East per se; although these are important matters with which the present study intersects. Rather, the thesis is concerned with the specialised use of writing to encode ethnic traditions, and the manner in which such emergent literary texts were encountered and experienced by their audiences. In other words, it is primarily concerned with the question: what were early literary texts for? In an ancillary sense, then, it is concerned inter alia with the context whence, and into which, the biblical text emerged. More specifically, the premise of the thesis is that through close contextual analysis of literary-epigraphic material, it is possible to shed empirical light on the uses and perception of literary texts in Iron Age Israel and Judah. As such, the thesis does not develop a general (or generalizable) model of textualisation; instead it is concerned with demonstrable uses of writing in the context of specific sets of early literary inscriptions, with a view to developing empirical and contextual controls for the wider discussions. To this end, the thesis is devoted to two complementary case-studies: namely, the plaster wall inscriptions from Kuntillet ʿAjrud (KAPT) and Deir ʿAlla (DAPT).

1.2. Textualisation in an Oral-Literate Continuum

There is an underlying assumption in the preceding paragraphs that the plaster texts emerged within a primarily oral context. This should be qualified by the observation that in each case it is impossible to determine whether the text was orally-derived (e.g. by transcription of a pre-existing song, as may have been the case for Kajr4.2, see Chapter 2), or whether it was composed anew in writing. Furthermore, we do not know precisely how the KAPT and DAPT were situated in relation to larger written tradition(s). It is possible that the plaster texts were themselves secondary
textual products, which were received in written form and copied onto the walls from pre-existing manuscripts. Indeed, this case has been made with regard to the DAPT in particular, chiefly on the basis of their visual configuration and the designation ספר, "scroll, book", in the superscription (see Chapter 5). Consequently, we simply cannot assume a priori that the KAPT or the DAPT represent incipient phases in the textualisation process. Be that as it may, the KAPT and DAPT are, by any estimate, comparatively early examples of the phenomenon of literary text production in a Northwest Semitic setting. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the following chapters, both sets of inscriptions intersect in important regards with aspects of biblical literature, suggesting that they partook in a wider matrix of folklore and popular motifs. Hence, while we cannot be certain that the KAPT or DAPT had an oral pre-history, it may be safely assumed that wider oral traditions formed a primary (perhaps the primary) frame of reference for their respective audiences.

In more general terms, the texts can be viewed within the framework of an oral-literate continuum.

The concept of an oral-literate continuum arose in the last decades of the 20th century in response to the “Great Divide” mentality that had developed as an outworking of the seminal studies on oral epic by Milman Parry and Albert Lord. The concept rapidly achieved the status of a

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2 This view has been advocated by André Lemaire especially; cf. André Lemaire, “Fragments from the Book of Balaam Found at Deir Alla”, BAR 11/5 (1985): 38.

3 In its earliest iterations, the concept of an oral-literate continuum is associated most closely with the British anthropologist and oral theorist Ruth Finnegan. See, for example, Ruth Finnegan, Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988). In particular, Finnegan was concerned with the arguments of Walter Ong and Jack Goody (among others) that the development of writing occasioned a cognitive development in literate societies, vis-à-vis non-literate or pre-literate societies, and the pejorative associations that were attached to the latter. For a brief but incisive discussion of developments and pitfalls within the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic camp, see John Miles Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1–7.
consensus in the fields of oral studies and folkloristics. Rather than viewing oral and literate modes as deterministically and diametrically opposed art forms, conditioned by their respective communicative technologies, proponents of an oral-literate continuum emphasise the many and varied ways orality and textuality continue to intersect—even in modern typographic societies—in a complex multi-modal interplay.

Without question, it was Susan Niditch who did most to introduce this paradigm to the study of ancient Israel, emphasising the profound influence of an oral aesthetic on the shape of biblical literature specifically, and the world of the Hebrew Bible generally. The significance of this insight was quickly recognised by others in the field, as is demonstrated by the importance placed on cognitive approaches to memory in a number of subsequent studies, and the rise of the biblical performance criticism movement.

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4 The programmatic and paradigmatic significance of this premise can easily be appreciated by a survey of the articles in the journal *Oral Tradition*.

5 Niditch has written many books, chapters, and articles on the topics of orality and folklore in ancient Israel, but it is her *Oral World and Written Word*, that has had the most profound impact on biblical studies; cf. Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

INTRODUCTION

These developments in the fields of oral theory and biblical studies have several important implications: first, by problematizing the evolutionist presuppositions of the “Great Divide” paradigm (i.e. that “oral” equals early and unsophisticated), they emphasise the importance of oral artistry, and the capacity of primarily oral societies to generate a “high culture”. Second, in a related development, they undermine the teleological view that written literature is an inevitable consequence of the technology of writing. Third, they discredit the (often implicit) assumption that oral and textual modes tend to behave in monolithic ways. Fourth, and most importantly, they underscore the fact that oral traditions do not cease to exist the moment they are committed to writing; rather, texts often continue in a mutually informing relationship with the oral traditions from which they are derived.

But, notwithstanding the tremendous utility and explanatory potential of the paradigm, the descriptive power of the oral-literate continuum suffers from a terminological weakness. That is because the term “continuum” entails an implied linearity. This limitation is amply demonstrated by Niditch’s attempts to situate texts at either the oral or literate ends of the continuum. In raising this objection, I do not wish to impugn Niditch’s work; she is sensitive to the issues at hand.\(^7\) Nor do I wish to imply that there is no distinction between oral and literate modes; clearly each has its own conventions and affords different communicative opportunities. My contention is simply that at one level, when classifying and describing texts, the model of a continuum can become unduly prescriptive, and runs the risk of enshrining precisely the binarism it was designed to combat.

One way around the impasse is to frame the questions of textualisation and textuality in terms of register. The concept of register is adapted from the social semiotic theories of M. A. K. Halliday, who defined it as “the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type”. According to Halliday, language also varies according to the functions it is being made to serve: what people are actually doing, in the course of which there is talking, or writing, involved; who the people are that are taking part in whatever is going on (in what statuses and roles they are appearing); and what exactly the language is achieving, or being used to achieve in the process. These three variables (what is going on; who are taking part; and what role the language is playing) are referred to as field, tenor, and mode; and they collectively determine the functional variety, or register, of the language that is being used.

For Halliday, then, communicative acts, whether spoken or written, are inherently functional and situational. The appeal of this conceptualisation is that it supplies a terminology that is at once precise enough to satisfy the requirements of classification with variable degrees of specificity (e.g. an oral poetic register, or a literary register), and dynamic enough to allow for interplay and mutual influence between registers and modalities.

1.3. John Miles Foley and the Immanent Tradition

Within the field of oral studies, the concept of register is most closely associated with the work of John Miles Foley. In a ground-breaking

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10 Ibid, 45.

11 Note that Niditch was herself deeply influenced by the work of her colleague, Foley, and the concept of an “oral register” features prominently in her work; see, for example, Susan Niditch, “Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto”, 387–408.
reconceptualisation of the processes by which meaning is produced in oral performance, Foley took the functional approach of Halliday and combined it with receptionalist theories developed in the field of literary criticism, and a keen sensitivity to the importance of situational and environmental context (in his terms, the “performance arena”) for the reception and interpretation of oral performance. This led him to posit a model of performance and reception that, by extension, has profound implications for the uses and function of writing in primarily oral societies.

At the heart of Foley’s model is the conviction that audiences, or more particularly their horizons of expectation, serve an important role as co-creators in the production of meaning. Thus, building on the work of literary theorist, Wolfgang Iser, Foley remarked:

the reader equipped to respond to textual signals must also be ready to bridge the gaps of indeterminacy that exist in all works of fiction ... it is not only the reception of positive, content-laden signals that constitutes the reader’s interpretative charge, but also the “emendation” of apparent lacunae that the author has left in the textual map as a natural and necessary part of the script for performance of the work.

It is a corollary of this conceptualisation that the expectations and experiences of the audience are an important consideration when approaching a performance or a text.

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13 At the analytical level, this is strictly speaking a matter of implied audience, equivalent to Wolfgang Iser’s implied reader: “An implied reader… is a projection from the text and is perceived by the reader as acting out the role of an ideal reader figure, although the real reader may not actually assume this role. In ironic texts, the implied reader position is understood to be filled with somebody capable of enjoying the ironical remarks by the narrator, and the real reader will ideally take on that role”; Monika Fludernik, An *Introduction to Narratology* (London: Routledge, 2009), 23; cf. Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 43.

14 Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 43. Note that this premise can be generalised beyond the narrow confines of fiction to embrace other genres and registers, including traditional stories and songs.
Foley’s great insight was to recognise the vital role of the immanent tradition in supplying the interpretive keys necessary for an audience to fill these gaps. According to Foley, “immanence may be defined as the set of metonymic, associative meanings institutionally delivered and received through a dedicated idiom or register either during or on the authority of traditional oral performance”.\(^1\) In other words, Foley was concerned with the way meaning is created in performance through a range of liminal and subliminal associations, so that various performance strategies including lexical choices and the employment of keyed phrases (and, in the present context, we might add medium) have a metonymic, or allusive, signification. Consequently, in every performance there is a reciprocal relationship between the audience and performer, their shared experience both within the context of the performance at hand and also all performances that have come before, and, ultimately, with the wider pool of tradition. To take an example from Foley, “under the aegis of such a reconception, [the formulaic epithet] ‘grey eyed Athena’ would serve as an approved traditional channel or pathway for summoning the Athena not just of this or that particular moment, but rather of all moments in the experience of audience and poet”.\(^2\)

To the extent that a written text intersects with, and references, the immanent tradition, oral and written modes are commensurable. Foley was quick to recognise the implications of this for emergent textuality, noting that if an orally-derived text is, in some sense, an active remembrance of oral tradition, then our interpretive strategies must endeavour to take

\(^{15}\) John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 7 (italics in the original). Foley also observed that “[t]he argument proceeds similarly for the vast array of traditional structures outside the noun-epithet formulas, and beyond even the larger category of the phraseology as a whole. That is, the traditional phrase or scene or story pattern has an indexical meaning vis-à-vis the immanent tradition; each integer reaches beyond the confines of the individual performance or oral-derived text to a set of traditional ideas much larger and richer than any single performance or text”; Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 6.

\(^{16}\) Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 5.
account of that continuation in its fullest rhetorical implications. The question then becomes, how does a text continue the tradition of reception? Furthermore, he noted that:

The responsibility for attention to this question does not derive from our knowledge or hypothesis that the work under consideration reaches us as a first-generation transcription of an oral performance, but from the evidence of an oral tradition in its background and some demonstration of the work’s continuing dependence upon that oral tradition.

As will be seen in the following pages, these conditions are satisfied by both the KAPT and the DAPT, and this brings us full-circle to the observation that the texts functioned within an oral-literate continuum, not only in the sense of traditional registers (their form or texture), but also in the sense of their content (including traditional referentiality).

In accordance with the foregoing considerations, the following discussion of textualisation will be predicated on the paradigm of an oral-literate continuum, in which written texts were both influenced by, and continued to influence, the immanent tradition, while the plaster texts themselves will be treated as instantiations of specific written registers.

1.4. SOME DEFINITIONS

Before proceeding to a discussion of past approaches to the problem of textualisation and the methods employed in the present study, it will be beneficial to establish a number of basic definitions.

In what follows, the term *text* will refer to a specific instance of writing, which has a spatial and visual presence.

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17 Ibid, 79.
18 Ibid, 79.
19 The following definitions pertain specifically to the terminology used (in a fairly pragmatic way) in the present discussion; they are not intended as general categories applicable at the wider level of theoretical discourse about the nature of literature.
The terms *literary* and *literature* can, on one level, be defined functionally, according to the conventional papyrological distinction between “documentary” and “literary” texts—that is, the distinction between occasional documents intended for a limited circulation (e.g. letters, tax records, lists, etc.), and works written for a wider audience (e.g. poetry, or narrative prose). At the same time, the concept of “literature” is also wider and more nebulous. In this broad sense, literature entails far more than a single text; it also pertains to a conventionalised system comprising reified vocabulary, themes, and structures, one of the chief characteristics of which is the quality of durability in the sense of trans-generational reiteration. It is in this broad sense that we can speak of a literary canon or literary register. Importantly, according to this definition, a new composition may qualify as literary if it coheres to the conventions of the literary register. Furthermore, when defined in this way, literature can be composed and transmitted either in written form or in oral performance.\(^{20}\) A *literary text*, then, is any text that contains a literary composition, either in part (i.e. an excerpt) or in full.

According to this definition, the concept of literature is closely related to tradition. By *tradition*, I mean a system of customs and lore that is indexically related to a particular social and performance setting, and which holds durational significance for the community within which it is transmitted. In this sense, *tradition* refers both to the contents of transmitted lore and to the horizons of expectation within which, and according to which, it is interpreted.

Finally, the term *textualisation* will refer to the processes of text production, particularly as this pertains to the encoding of oral tradition in written form. Defined narrowly, textualisation is the act of committing a particular composition (e.g. a story or song) to writing. Defined broadly, it is a part of a generalised process whereby a number of literary works are (re)produced as texts. In its broadest sense, the phenomenon of

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textualisation can refer to the development whereby chirographic and typographic technologies supplant oral performance as the prevailing mode of transmission; although, as discussed above, this does not necessarily entail the cessation of the oral tradition.

1.5. APPROACHES TO TEXTUALISATION IN THE STUDY OF THE HEBREW BIBLE AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The phenomenon of textualisation was not unique (or even original) to the secondary states of the southern Levant. Indeed, in the older neighbouring cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia sophisticated uses of writing, including what may be termed literary genres, were already well developed by the first millennium B.C.E. Therefore, the likelihood that these cultures influenced the rise of the textuality in the Iron Age Levant must be seriously entertained. Nevertheless, because the focus of the present study is on the textualisation of ethnic traditions and the function of such texts within their immediate contexts, it is not enough to simply adduce the existence of comparable literary forms, as though this somehow explains the phenomenon. As such, primary attention should be given to geographically, temporally, and culturally proximate examples of emergent textuality. Within these parameters, the Hebrew Bible occupies a special place as the most extensive witness to literary text production.

The problem of textualisation has long been recognised by biblical scholars. In what follows below I provide an overview of major developments in approaches to textualisation in the field of biblical studies since the beginning of the 20th century. This necessarily brief sketch is intended to serve as a basic introduction to some of the wider issues with which the present study intersects.

Already in the works of the earliest form critics, the problem of textualisation arose as a natural consequence of the emphasis placed on

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“primitive” oral traditions.\textsuperscript{22} According to Gunkel, the drawing together of individual stories (\textit{Märchen}) into larger complexes (\textit{Sagen}) began already in the oral pre-history of the Bible.\textsuperscript{23} Gunkel saw the textualisation of these complexes as a project of conservation, conducted by many writers over a protracted period. Thus, in \textit{The Legends of Genesis} he conjectured, “the writing down of the popular traditions probably took place at a period which was generally disposed to authorship and when there was a fear that the oral traditions might die out if they were not reduced to writing”.\textsuperscript{24} For Gunkel, this was couched within a larger concern about the evolution of an historical genre in the time of the monarchy. Thus, in Gunkel’s view, the culmination of the textualisation process was history writing (\textit{Geschichtsschreibung}), which, he believed, existed only in written form among small circles of literate elites.\textsuperscript{25}

In its time, Gunkel’s schema for the evolution of biblical traditions was innovative and it held a pervasive influence over biblical scholarship for several generations, particularly in the Germanic schools.\textsuperscript{26} As a consequence, the question of textualisation became intimately bound to the rise of history writing. This development was given fullest expression in the tradition-historical approach pioneered by Gerhard von Rad and Martin Noth.

For von Rad, textualisation was an outworking of a cognitive development, marked by the distinctively Hebrew capacity to “think

\textsuperscript{22} I use the term “primitive” advisedly in an attempt to highlight the evolutionist assumptions underpinning the work of the early form critics. It should be noted that, overall, there is a sense of deterministic inevitability—tinted by the modernist ideal of rational enlightenment—that pervades Gunkel’s work.

\textsuperscript{23} Hermann Gunkel, \textit{The Legends of Genesis} (trans. W. H. Carruth; Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 1901), 123.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 123.


\textsuperscript{26} For an excellent discussion see Van Seters, \textit{In Search of History}, 209–20.
historically” (i.e. “causally”).\textsuperscript{27} According to von Rad, such historical thinking was conditioned by (1) the ancient Israelites’ preoccupation with their own origins; (2) the development of a narrative style; and (3) the belief that God actively intervened in human affairs.\textsuperscript{28} According to this view, textualisation, in the form of history writing, was essentially an analytical or interpretative enterprise that grew out of older (oral) aetiologies and heroic sagas. In von Rad’s opinion, the first example of this new genre was the historical narrative about the succession to the throne of David,\textsuperscript{29} which, he argued, was composed in the court of Solomon.\textsuperscript{30}

The emphasis on causational thinking also featured at the heart of the Deuteronomistic hypothesis articulated by Noth.\textsuperscript{31} Here we must draw a distinction between the sources used by the Deuteronomist(s)—including annalistic material and short orally-derived texts commensurate with those posited by Gunkel—and the final redacted work, concerned with the theological interpretation of Israel’s history in the period from the Conquest to the Exile. Ultimately, for Noth’s Deuteronomist, writing from the vantage point of the Exile, history writing served a moralising, didactic purpose.

However, notwithstanding the explanatory power of the models developed by the form and tradition critics, these early studies are marred by a significant oversight; namely, the question of the texts’ intended


\textsuperscript{29} In delineating the succession narrative, von Rad basically accepted the earlier reconstruction in Leonard Rost, \textit{Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids}; English translation: \textit{The Succession to the Throne of David} (trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982).

\textsuperscript{30} von Rad, “The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel”, 176–204.

audiences. Just who were they meant to address? Further, how widely, and by what processes, were they disseminated? These fundamental questions have largely gone unanswered in subsequent iterations of the Deuteronomistic hypothesis.32

In Frank Moore Cross’ influential revision of the Deuteronomistic hypothesis, the presuppositions underlying the discourse around textualisation took a major turn. By positing an earlier Josianic redaction (Dtr1) that presented the reforms of King Josiah as a new hope for Israel, Cross introduced the concept that text production might have served an apologetic purpose for ideological legitimisation.33 Textualisation, in the form of history writing, was no longer a retrospective interpretive process as it was for Noth’s Deuteronomist; now it was a creative enterprise that could serve as a sort of ideological propaganda. However, questions remain about the identity of the intended audience, and the effectiveness of writing as communicative medium in a context of limited literacy. Nevertheless, the seed had been sown, and it quickly took root, finding its fullest expression in the so-called minimalist movement that arose in the last decades of the 20th century.34

In 1996 Susan Niditch fundamentally altered the tenor of the discussion, with the publication of her monograph Oral World and Written Word. Shifting attention away from the homogenising tendencies of source and redaction criticisms, Niditch argued the need for greater complexity, emphasising the dynamic interplay of oral and literary qualities in the biblical text. For her part, Niditch proposed four models of textualisation

32 The notable exception to this oversight is in the work Raymond Person, see below.
34 Consider, for example, the following comments by Lemche: “The Israelite nation as explained by the biblical writers has little in the way of a historical background. It is a highly ideological construct created by ancient scholars of Jewish tradition in order to legitimize their own religious community and its religio-political claims on land and religious exclusivity”; Neils Peter Lemche, The Israelites in History and Tradition (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1998), 165–66.
that might account for the origins and function of portions of the biblical corpus:

(1) the oral performance, which is dictated to a writer who preserves the text in an archive, creating a fixed text out of an event; (2) the slow crystallization of a pan-Hebraic literary tradition through many performances over centuries of increasingly pan-Israelite tales to audiences with certain expectations and assumptions about shared group identity; late in the process authors write down the shared stories; (3) a written imitation of oral-style literature to create portions of the tradition; (4) the production of a written text that is excerpted from another written text by a writer who deftly edits or recasts the text in accordance with his own view of Israelite identity.  

According to Niditch, none of these is, or could be, a complete model for the composition of the Hebrew Bible, but each might have been a viable process contributing to its final shape. Ultimately, Niditch’s great contribution was to demonstrate the variegated nature of biblical literature, and the need for sensitivity to the interactive continuation of oral tradition alongside biblical literature. Yet more importantly, she drew attention to the limiting role of tradition as a control in the creative processes of textualisation.

In 2004 the question of textualisation of biblical tradition was put firmly back on the agenda with the publication of a short but provocative study by William Schniedewind, entitled *How the Bible Became a Book*:

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36 In later works Niditch was critical of what she perceived to be attempts to “[tuck] notions of orality more safely under some of the old assumptions about documents and intertextuality”; e.g. Susan Niditch, “Hebrew Bible and Oral Literature: Misconceptions and New Directions”, in *The Interface Between Orality and Writing* (eds. Annette Weissenrieder and Robert B. Coote; *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 260; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 8–9.
The Textualization of Ancient Israel.\textsuperscript{37} Where Niditch had emphasized synchronic variation, Schniedewind was primarily concerned with the diachronic, historical processes that had led to textualisation. For Schniedewind, the recording of tradition in writing was primarily a political tool:

The making of books and the appeal to the authority of writing was largely derived from the institutions of state and temple. Writing was the domain of the royal court and then the priestly aristocracy. Writing was used as a tool of government and then taken over as a tool of religious authority and orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{38}

What is particularly interesting in the present context is Schniedewind’s emphasis on the socio-political changes of the late-\textsuperscript{8th} century as a watershed in the phenomenon of textualisation in ancient Israel and Judah.

A major transition in ancient Israel began in the late eighth century B.C.E. Writing became both more centralized and more widespread in Judah; as the society became urbanized, the economy more complex and the government more substantial. Writing had always been a projection of royal power, and now this power extended to the collection of a great library in Jerusalem (just as the Assyrians and the Egyptians were doing during this same period). King Hezekiah desired to create a kingdom similar to the legendary (in his days) kingdom of David and Solomon.\textsuperscript{39}

A second major theme of Schniedewind’s work was the metaphysical dimension of writing: “[w]riting had a numinous power, especially in pre-literate societies. Writing was not used, at first, to canonize religious praxis, but to engender religious awe. Writing was a gift


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 212.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 191, see also the longer discussion in Chapters 3, “Writing and the State”, and 5, “Hezekiah and the Beginning of Biblical Literature”.
of the gods. It had supernatural powers to bless and to curse.\textsuperscript{40} According to this conception, the materiality and non-rational functions of writing are important considerations that should not be overlooked in the study of textuality (for a discussion in the present study, see especially Appendix B).\textsuperscript{41}

The political dimension of writing was also emphasised by Seth Sanders in his 2009 monograph, \textit{The Invention of Hebrew}, and in a series of related articles.\textsuperscript{42} Taking a wide comparative and diachronic approach, Sanders argued that the emergence of “vernacular” texts (i.e. native texts written in local dialects) was intimately related to the rise of the early alphabets:

Excavated texts show that Ugarit by the thirteenth century and Israel-Judah by the eighth century had produced standardized written forms of their spoken regional languages. The creation of these literatures represents an act of political will of an unprecedented sort ... This is to say that they represent deliberate attempts to produce a native literature in a native language and writing system, over against an international cosmopolitan \textit{lingua franca}, Babylonian.\textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{41} For a similar discussion in the context of Classical Greece, see Rosalind Thomas, \textit{Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. Chapter 5, “Beyond the Rationalist View of Writing”.


\textsuperscript{43} Sanders, “What was the Alphabet For?”, 26.
According to Sanders, the rise of the alphabet and localised script traditions in the developing Levantine states during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages fundamentally altered the conceptual landscape, fostering a new sense of cultural identity and distinctiveness.\footnote{“The early alphabet was not universalizing, but particularizing—precisely the opposite of what we would expect from the conventional story of the alphabet. It would have been difficult, even impossible, to use this alphabet anywhere but home. Rather than being universal, the texts were designed to be read within a strictly limited region”; Sanders, \textit{The Invention of Hebrew}, 56.}

For Sanders, a pivotal moment in the story of the rise of vernacular texts came during the 9\textsuperscript{th} century in the form of royal monumental inscriptions, proclaiming the \textit{magnalia regis}, and cast in the voice of the king.\footnote{“Historical narrative first appears in West Semitic during a broad historical moment of around fifty years, across a region from Anatolia through Syria in the North down to Jordan in the South. This Early wave consists of no less than five known inscriptions, all most likely from the last third of the ninth century B.C.E. (though two might be slightly later, from the early eighth). The suddenness, breadth, and uniformity with which a new genre appears at on stroke in a set of newly written languages can hardly be an accident of discovery. At once we witness something new entering the world and recognize it as the transformation of something else.” Sanders, \textit{The Invention of Hebrew}, 114.} Now, to the extent that these monumental texts address a specific political context at a particular moment in time, they do not strictly qualify as literary in the sense defined above.\footnote{Note, especially, that the historical presentations these monuments contain have more to do with the exploits of the king, addressed to the political exigencies of the immediate moment, rather than popular traditions transmitted over generations.} Nevertheless, they signal an important transformation with regard to the perceived potential of writing, in a period shortly before the KAPT and DAPT were written on their respective walls.\footnote{It should be reiterated that we cannot be certain that the physical plaster texts were the incipient forms of the respective texts.}

The sudden and dramatic appearance of the royal monumental inscriptions in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.E. also features in a forthcoming article...
by Brian Schmidt. In Schmidt’s view, one of the earliest and most important examples of “lengthy” literary text production in the southern Levant is the Mesha inscription, which, he argues, was a local emulation of the Aramean imperialising practice of erecting victory monuments in conquered territory; a practice that was, in turn, inspired by Neo-Assyrian prototypes. Thus, the production of literary texts was, for Schmidt, initially a result of external influence, and related to the rhetoric of power. This proposition has particular significance for the present study, because Schmidt identifies the DAPT as a product of the same socio-political situation. That is, he argues that the DAPT was written in a (local?) Aramean dialect as an expression of Aram’s recently acquired control of Ammon-Gilead and the regional market economy. By framing this expression of hegemonic authority in the form of an oracular tradition familiar to the local populations (cf. the biblical oracles against the nations), the writer claimed divine legitimation, superordinate to local religious traditions. In this, Schmidt’s argument approximates the earlier arguments of Erhard Blum, who raised the possibility that the DAPT contained originally disparate traditions reconfigured by Aram-Damascus


49 Note that Schmidt’s working definition differs from mine in the emphasis he places on length. This led him to explicitly exclude the KAPT from his primary data-set: “Such lengthy literary texts in the epigraphic corpus should also be distinguished from much shorter literary texts like the early 8th century, partially preserved, six-line text (a hymn?) from Kuntillet Ajrud, or the later non-literary, eleven-line epigraphic production, Arad Ostracon 31, a palimpsest list of grain allocations. The first is very brief and fragmentary, though literary, while the second is twice as long but non-literary in character”; Schmidt, “Memorializing Conflict”, 2. However, given paradigmatic implications of the phenomenon textualisation, discussed above, I believe that it is quality, not quantity, that should be the determining factor when appraising the evidence for literary textuality in this period.

50 Schmidt, “Memorializing Conflict”, 12.

51 Schmidt, “Memorializing Conflict”, 12.
for the purpose of the acculturation of the local elites. The implications of this are profound, because it suggests that the textualisation of local traditions in the southern Levant was ultimately derived from an external precedent, and was, in some sense, imposed on the local populations. This may be correct. However, as I will argue in Part 2, the evidence that the DAPT were written in Aramaic by an Aramean scribe is not, in my view, compelling. Yet, even so, the complex socio-political interconnections of the 9th–8th centuries were doubtless an important factor in the story of textualisation.

There is one other model that deserves to be discussed at this juncture; that is, the view that the textualisation was closely connected with the educational curricula of scribal schools. This view has been championed by David Carr, Karel van der Toorn, and Raymond Person, among others. At the heart of the model is the conviction, based on analogy with the better documented cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia, that the primary loci for the composition and transmission of literary texts were the schools attached to scribal guilds. In many ways this is an attractive position, particularly with regard to the transmission, redaction, and canonisation of long-duration texts. However, the model does not, of itself, shed much light on the processes of, and impulse behind, textualisation, and its explanatory power is greatly reduced when it approaches the question of nascent textuality.


53 See, especially, Carr, Writing on the Tablet of the Heart; Karel van der Toorn, Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Person, The Deuteronomistic School. However, note that Person was particularly interested questions of redaction, rather than initial composition.
1.6. THE WRITING ON THE WALL

The most striking characteristic of the discourse surrounding textualisation, especially during the last decade, is the plurality of approaches and the ensuing diversity of conclusions. Rather than a clear consensus, we are left with a number of questions: Did textualisation serve a political purpose as a tool of ideological persuasion? Did it primarily take place in the context of scribal education? Was textualisation associated with religious institutions or with the state (if such a distinction can be made), or both? Were the writers principally concerned to record and memorialise the received tradition, or did textualisation involve a creative, compositional element? To what extent did the immanent tradition determine the form and contents of emergent texts? And, perhaps most importantly, who were the text’s intended audience(s)?

Clearly, what is needed in order to sift through this plurality is some sort of contextual control. That is, demonstrable instances of literary text production where the context of reception is known and logical inferences can be drawn about the text’s audience(s) and function. It is precisely for this reason that KAPT and DAPT have been selected as case studies. This is especially timely, since, with the recent publication of the archaeological material and inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud (after a delay of some 35 years), evidence of an unprecedented quality and quantity is now available.54

In many ways the plaster texts from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Deir 'Alla are exceptionally well-suited as case studies for the question at hand. First, an analogous use of writing with ink on plaster is attested in Deuteronomy 27:2–8, when Moses instructed the elders of Israel to erect an altar on Mount Ebal and to inscribe the words of the law on plastered stones. Consequently, in terms of the technology of writing, it is possible to establish a direct line of continuity with a custom described in the Hebrew

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Bible. Second, as will be discussed in the following chapters, the contents of both sets of inscriptions have numerous points of intersection with biblical traditions. Third, the KAPT and DAPT share remarkable similarities with each other in terms of their physical presentation and content, making them ideally suited for comparative analysis. Thus, both sets of inscriptions were written on the plaster that covered the walls of their respective rooms, both were accompanied by pictorial designs, in both cases the writers used a combination of red and black inks, and at both sites the rooms in which the plaster texts were discovered were lined with benches (see Chapters 4 and 7 respectively).

However, the plaster texts also present difficulties of their own; chiefly in the matter of medium. Put simply, because the KAPT and DAPT were display texts written on walls, they share a specialised range of functions, which are distinct from the movable papyrus or leather scrolls that are assumed to lie behind the biblical texts (cf. Jeremiah 36). In general terms, such display inscriptions can be loosely identified with four overlapping functions. These will be treated in greater detail when considering the inscriptions in later chapters. The four functions are:

1) Denotative: the text serves to communicate a specific set of information; e.g. the historical accounts in the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, and the Tell Dan, Mesha, and Kilamuwa inscriptions. Often this is associated with a commemorative or memorialising function.

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Note that the parallel text in Josh 8:30–32 seems to be corrupt and it is the altar itself that is inscribed. Later parallels for the phenomenon of writing on walls are known: e.g. Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, II.6; *m. Roš Haš*. II.8–9; Ben Sira 22:17. I am indebted to Stephen Llewelyn for these references. Note also that Lawrence Stager has argued that the standing stones at Shechem might have been coated with plaster and inscribed, drawing parallels with both Deut 27:2–4 and the DAPT; cf. Lawrence E. Stager, “The Shechem Temple”, *BAR* 29/4 (2003): 26–31, 33–35, 66, 68–69; I am indebted to Gerrit van der Kooij for this reference.
2) *Connotative/emblematic*: in this case it is not so much the words themselves that are significant but, the connotations they evoke. In the example of royal inscriptions above, allusions to specific military conquests also stand *pars pro toto* for the exploits of the monarch in a more general sense, thereby conveying an implicit message about the military prowess and dominance of the ruler. In this regard the materiality (i.e. location, scale, iconography, and medium) of the inscription may also be important; e.g. the Tell Dan Stele, which was erected in conquered territory as a visual symbol of Aramean hegemony, or the Mesha Stele, symbolising Mesha’s piety and military superiority.

3) *Numinous*: this function is harder to determine archaeologically or epigraphically. One manifestation of this function relates to apotropaic or protective functions; e.g. the Arslan Tash plaques with their incantation texts for protection of the house.

4) *Ornamental*: this views writing as aesthetic in a purely decorative sense, without depending directly on the information contained within the text.

The specialised nature of these functions mandates a high degree of caution when attempting to move beyond the plaster texts themselves and draw general inferences about the phenomenon of textualisation.

1.7. AIMS AND METHODS

In order to present the evidence in as systematic a manner as possible, the thesis will be divided into two parts corresponding to the two case studies. Part 1 will consider the KAPT, and Part 2 will consider the DAPT. The overarching method of both parts will be close contextual analysis, framed in terms of the audiences’ experiences, and what this reveals about the function(s) of the plaster texts.

According to the receptionalist perspective discussed above, the environmental and situational context of the KAPT and DAPT (i.e. what
activities were conducted in the space) forms an essential frame of reference, equivalent to both the format of the text (i.e. its materiality and visual-semiotic configuration) and its content (i.e. its denotative function and its connotations vis-à-vis the immanent tradition). It stands to reason, then, that integrated consideration of these three variables (i.e. format, content, and situation) can be used to predict (adapting a Hallidayan concept) the purpose the texts were intended to serve.56

To this end, the two case studies will both be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will focus on the question: what was written? Specifically, it will explore the form and content of the texts (both literary and non-literary) in order to develop a holistic overview of textual activity at each site, and consider the ways in which the plaster texts intersected with the immanent tradition. The second chapter will explore the question: who was writing? That is, it will be concerned with aspects of each text’s format as encoded in dialect and script. This will be approached via linguistic and palaeographic analyses, with a view to circumscribing the socio-linguistic traditions with which the plaster texts were affiliated. The third chapter in each section will consider the question: how were the texts experienced by their audience(s)? The focus of these chapters will be a detailed spatial analysis of the physical context in which the plaster texts were encountered. The governing principle behind this spatial analysis will be interactive. That is, consideration of the practical constraints

56 In Halliday’s terms: “[t]he participants of a culture make use of this close relationship between the text and the situation as a basis for their own interaction. I have used the term ‘prediction’ to refer to this, and it is perhaps important to make one point clear. I am not saying, of course, that either the participant in the situation, or the linguist looking over his or her shoulder, can predict the text in the sense of actually guessing in advance what exactly what is going to be said or written; obviously not. What I am saying is that we can and do (and must) make inferences from the situation to the text, about the kinds of meaning that are likely to be exchanged; and also inferences from the text to the situation”; M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social Semiotic Perspective (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 34–38.
determining an audience’s ability to interact with the text, particularly as this is indicated by lines of sight. In the event that interaction seems impractical, other possibilities (e.g. symbolic or numinous functions) will be considered. It might be objected that this method favours a pragmatic paradigm, which presupposes a human audience, and relegates the metaphysical dimensions of writing to secondary importance. However, it is the only sure basis on which an empirical approach can be founded, and allows us to avoid the precipitous step of assuming, from the outset, a magical or numinous function that cannot be verified. Even so, this might seem to unduly limit the scope of discussion, and will not be entirely satisfactory to all readers. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it will provide fresh insights and, in due course, generate new discussion.

The last section (Part 3) will present a series of individual and comparative conclusions relating to the respective functions of the KAPT and DAPT. Chief among these are the inferences that the plaster texts served an aesthetic purpose, giving physical and enduring expression to the activities conducted within their respective spaces, and that, at both sites, textualisation was inherently (if indirectly) associated with religious activities. Finally, a number of generalised inferences will be considered, with regard to the phenomenon of textualisation and the origins of the Hebrew Bible, and new lines of enquiry will be proposed.

The method of translation employed throughout the thesis is as literal as practicable—sometimes at the expense of English style—while maintaining the texture and literary quality of the original texts. Where vocalisation is called for, my policy has been to follow the Tiberian system. This is not a perfect solution, but it is a viable proxy for a fully realised historical phonology, and it is adequate for representational purposes. Departures from this system are noted and explained wherever necessary.

Finally, in a more general sense, it is not my intention to produce new editions of the KAPT and DAPT. Both sets of texts have been published in full, and vast bodies of secondary literature have grown
around them. With this in mind, the epigraphic remarks in the following chapters are principally limited to matters that have a bearing on the function and purpose of the texts, and to the elucidation of my position with regard to disputed readings and issues of interpretation. Nevertheless, I have ventured to propose several new restorations and interpretations along the way in the hope that these might be found acceptable.

57 For the editiones principes see Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman); J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla (Documenta et monumenta Orientis antiqui 19; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976).
PART ONE

—— KUNILLET ‘AJRUD ——
Fig. 2.1—Location map of the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions
Chapter 2

EPIGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE KUNITLET ‘AJRUD INSCRIPTIONS

The architectural remains at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud consist of two buildings. The larger and better preserved of the two, commonly referred to as Building A, seems to have included the main living areas (see Chapter 4). It was in this building that the majority of the inscriptions and all of the plaster texts were discovered (see fig.2.1). The structure to the east, Building B, is severely eroded and its function is difficult to determine. None of the plaster texts was found in Building B; although the excavators did discover a number of decorated plaster fragments bearing floral and geometric designs and a partially preserved drawing of a wall with crenelated towers and figures standing on the ramparts.¹

2.1 THE SCOPE OF THE PRESENT DISCUSSION

The primary concern of this study is the plaster inscriptions. However, these were not produced in isolation, and they are surrounded by numerous inscriptions and drawings on stone and ceramic objects; most notably the two decorated pithoi, commonly referred to as Pithos A and B (respectively), which have excited considerable attention due to their possible allusions to (and perhaps depictions of) the goddess Asherah. Therefore, in order to contextualise the KAPT in terms of written activity at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud generally, this chapter will begin with a discussion of

¹ The plaster drawings are discussed in Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 184–98, esp. 185–86. The editor, Pirhiya Beck, described the latter scene as a “city wall”. She does not seem to have considered the possibility that it is a depiction of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud itself, despite the fact that Building A had tower-like structures at each of its four corners.
the non-plaster inscriptions, before turning to an analysis of the plaster texts.

Given the limitations of a thesis such as this, it will not be possible to engage in a general way with the iconographic material, although specific images and groups of images will be discussed as they are relevant for understanding the function of the written material.\(^2\) Nevertheless, special mention should be made of Pirhiya Beck’s proposal, recently taken up again by Brian Schmidt, that certain images and texts on the pithoi might have served as drafts or studies, which were subsequently transferred to the walls.\(^3\) This is certainly possible, but it should be noted that there is no instance in which a particular text or image has demonstrably been reproduced.\(^4\) As such, a methodologically cautious approach is to treat the inscriptions (and drawings) on pithoi and plaster as discrete corpora.


\(^3\) See Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman), 197; Brian B. Schmidt, “Kuntillet Ajrud’s Pithoi Inscriptions and Drawings: Graffiti and Scribal-Artisan Drafts?”, Maarav (forthcoming).

\(^4\) It is true that on the plaster in Building B there was a volute tree design which is reminiscent of (though not identical to) the motif of the tree flanked by ibexes on Pithos A; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman), 188, 152 (respectively). Similarly, a painted stone (graffito?) from the doorjamb of the southern storeroom includes a human head and some sort of animal design, which are broadly comparable to images on both pithoi; although the arrangement on the doorjamb appears to be an ad hoc jumble of motifs, rather than a carefully planned design (on the arrangement of texts and drawings on the pithoi, see below); see ibid, 196. Be that as it may, it will be argued in chapter 4 that the seated figure in the entrance to Building A is reminiscent of the figure of the lyre player on Pithos A (cf. also the design on painted sherd “Z” discussed by Schmidt, “Kuntillet Ajrud’s Pithoi Inscriptions and Drawings”)). But again the designs differ in specific details, suggesting a similar topic but not necessarily that the one was a study for the other. Notwithstanding these reservations, the suggestion of scribal-drafts is in many ways an attractive proposal. However, it is possible to make too much of the similarity
In addition, due to the importance of Kuntillet Ṭjrud for the study of ancient Israelite folk-religion, past discussions have typically been dominated by the Asherah/asherah question—that is, whether the expression לארשAthא signifies the goddess or the cultic object of the same name. However, the semantic distinctions of the Asherah/asherah question are largely tangential to the present focus on the uses of writing, and there are already many excellent treatments of the question. Consequently, I will not attempt to resolve it here. Suffice to say, at Kuntillet Ṭjrud לארשAthא occurs exclusively in connection with YHWH in the expression ... והארשAthא; hence, what obtains for YHWH in those instances also obtains for his Asherah/asherah.

2.2. *Inscriptions Incised in Stone: Kajr1.2–1.4*

2.2.1. *A Large Stone Basin: Kajr1.2*

*Kajr1.2* consists of a single line of twenty-one letters incised into the rim of a large limestone basin. According to Meshel, the basin (weighing about 150kg) was brought to the site from outside, although the inscription itself may have been incised at Kuntillet Ṭjrud. The basin was discovered broken into nine fragments in a layer of fill (possibly a collapse) in the eastern part of the southern store-room of building A (see fig.2.1), apparently having fallen from another part of the structure.
To ’Obadyāw son of ’Adnāh blessed be he to YHW

Aḥituv et al. observed that in this context the preposition should probably be interpreted as having the sense “pertaining to, as for”, referring to the PN as the intended beneficiary of the invocation, rather than designating ownership of the vessel or its contents; cf. “לעבדיוו—I have heard you, behold I (hereby) bless him” (Gen 17:20).

The shape of ’āyin is peculiar, being formed as a round depression in the stone rather than the usual circular outline (cf. the more typical ’āyin in ninth position). As such, its shape resembles that of a word divider. This separation of the preposition from the object it governs is unparalleled in either the biblical or epigraphic records outside of Kuntillet ’Ajrud; however, a similar disjunction apparently occurs in Kajr3.6 line 3.8 But, whereas in Kajr3.6 the preposition is appended to its preceding verb—suggesting a cognitive error arising at

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the level of the wider semantic unit (see below)—in Kajr1.2 the preposition has no comparable antecedent. Moreover, the fact that no other word dividers appear in Kajr1.2, together with the external witness to the PN in Samaria Ostracon 50 (see appendix A) lend weight to Meshel’s suggested reading, “Obadiah”. Nevertheless, a possible, albeit less likely, alternative is: ל.עדיו “ל.עדיו” (cf. עדיהו, Arad 58; WSS 21, 156, 293–93, 336, 593; 2 Chr 23:1; 2 Kgs 22:1; I Chr 6:26; Ezra 10:39).

ברך—A Qal passive participle = BHךְו בָּר. For the same expression see Ruth 2:20. Note the absence of internal mater lectionis indicating long -ū- (cf. §3.2.1). An equivalent participial form is found in a similar phrase in line 2 of the Uriah inscription from Khirbet el-Qôm Tomb 2, as well as the unprovenanced “stonecutter” inscription (probably also from Kh. el-Qôm), and two offering (?) bowls from Samaria which probably bear the incised formula “blessed be PN [by DN],”

Most commentators interpret this inscription as having a precatory force, i.e. “may PN be blessed by DN.” However, the participle may

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12 Ibid, 548-49.
14 Cf. the general discussion in Tigay, “Priestly Reminder Stones”, 344 and n.16.; alternatively, cf. John Healy’s suggestion (discussed by Tigay) that the analogous Palmyrene formula dkyr ḫb was addressed to the passer by, instructing them to name (in this case, to bless) the individual; John F. Healy, “May He Be Remembered for Good: An Aramaic Formula”, in Targumic and Cognate Studies: Essays in Honour of Martin
also be understood to have a predicative function (cf. Gen 14:19), i.e. "PN is blessed by DN"; in which case, the formula serves as a performative, simultaneously actualising and memorialising the blessing (cf. several Phoenician votive seals which describe the donors as "the blessed"). Significantly, as the predicate participle typically entails a durative sense, the inscription ensures that the invocation would be offered continuously and perpetually on behalf of the beneficiary (see Appendix B). Whatever the case, the illocutionary force of the formula amounts to a plea for (continued) blessing by the deity.

—Here the preposition follows the passive verb to express agency (cf. בְּרָכָה אֶלְמָא לַאֲלֵי הָהוֹוָא, “blessed be Abram by God on high”, Gen 14:19).

יהו is evidently an apocopated form of the Tetragrammaton which occurs only here and (possibly) in Kajr3.9; elsewhere, the Tetragrammaton is written in full (Kajr3.1, 3.6, 3.9, 4.1.1).


16 Cf. WSS 717, 718, 720, 722 and 723; see also, line 1 of the Karatepe inscription KAI 26.


19 The correctness of both readings has been questioned; cf. Johannes Renz, Die Althebräischen Inschriften: Teil 1 Text und Kommentar (vol. 1 of Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik. Edited by Johannes Renz and Wolfgang Röllig. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 56 n.a. However, for a possible late 8th or early 7th century B.C.E. parallel of the shortened spelling see Pessah Bar-Adon, “An Early Hebrew Inscription in a Judean Desert Cave”, IEJ 25 (1975): 228. But note that the poor preservation of the latter and the curvature of the stalactite on which this text was inscribed mean we cannot be certain of the original spelling. For several additional (possible) late parallels see Meshel, Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 130; Brian A.
Renz suggested that the faint horizontal strokes after the wāw might be traces of hê, but on inspection of the published photographs it seems unlikely that these marks belong to a letter, and Renz’ proposal has met with little acceptance.\(^{20}\)

In more general terms, Aḥituv et al. have observed that where the Tetragrammaton occurs in the absolute state in a nominal construct it is written in full, but that the shortened form occurs in instances where the noun stands alone.\(^{21}\) This observation is supported by the possibility that both the short and long forms of the tetragrammaton might be attested under these conditions in Kajr3.9,\(^{22}\) and to a lesser degree, that the proper noun הַדַּוִּית in Kajr1.2—which also occurs in the absolute state in the nominal construct הַדַּוִּית—is similarly written plene with final ה while the shortened form of the Tetragrammaton occurs later in the same line.\(^{23}\) Even so, the editors were reluctant to posit a theological reason for the various spellings.\(^{24}\) An alternative possibility proposed by Dennis Pardee is that the shortened form may simply be a phonetic spelling (yahwê) according to the Northern Israelite/Phoenician tradition.\(^{25}\) However, this does not explain the occurrence of both

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\(^{20}\) The photograph published in Ze’ev Meshel and Carol Meyers, “The Name of God in the Wilderness of Zin”, BA 39 (1976): 8, fig.2, leaves no doubt as to the fact that no attempt was made to represent a final hê.

\(^{21}\) Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman), 129.

\(^{22}\) Although see “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud: Inscribed Pithos 2”, translated by P. Kyle McCarter (COS 2.47B:172, n.4.

\(^{23}\) Note the probable different vowel quality in each.

\(^{24}\) Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman), 129–30.

\(^{25}\) Dennis Pardee, “An Evaluation of the Proper Names from Ebla from a West Semitic Perspective: Pantheon Distribution According to Genre,” in Eblaite Personal Names and Semitic Name Giving (ed. Alfonso Archi; vol. 1 Archivi reali di Ebla: Studi; Missione archeologica italiana in Siria, 1988), 119-51
spellings in *Kajr*3.9 (assuming the reading is correct), or the fact that
the full form appears in *Kajr*3.6, a fragment of an epistolary address
formula written according to the northern orthographic conventions
(viz. *תמן* with contraction of the diphthong, cf. §3.2.3), while the
sender’s name includes the northern theophoric element *יו* (cf. §3.4).  
In other words, the dialectical explanation does not appear to be
consistently borne out in other northern dialect inscriptions. Finally, it
cannot be ruled out that the shortened form is simply the result of
scribal error.  

*Kajr*4.2 appears to have a votive or dedicatory purpose, in which a donor
is named and blessing is sought from YHWH. The immensity of the object
means that it is unlikely to have moved much once it was positioned; as
such, it can be viewed as a fixture of sorts. As noted by André Lemaire,
the letters are crudely written, with several forms attested for the same
letter (cf. the *beth* in the seventh and thirteenth positions); although, it
should be noted that the uneven surface of the vessel makes the uniform
reproduction of the letters difficult.  

26 Of course, it cannot be presumed that the dialect of the author was identical to that of
the individual who wrote text, although in this instance the orthographic evidence seems
to point in that direction.

27 So, André Lemaire, “Date et origine des inscriptions hebraïques et pheniciennes de
Voices from the Biblical World*, (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1996), 110;
Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (New
York: Continuum, 2001), 399 n.102.

28 Even so, the exceptional difference between the first and second *ayin (?)* and the
unevenness of the inscription, characterised by the shallow carving of the initial letters
 esp. *beth* and *dâlet* in the third and fourth positions) when compared to the deeper
incisions in the second half of the inscription, may suggest that this inscription was carved
by an inexperienced hand; cf. André Lemaire, “Date et origine des inscriptions hebraïques
2.2.2. THREE INCISED STONE BOWLS

In addition to the large stone basin, the excavators unearthed three smaller inscribed stone bowl fragments with PNN partially preserved on their rims.

\[ Kajr1.1 \] Šēmaʿāw son of ʿEzer
\[ Kajr1.3 \] Šōbāl (son of) Ḥaliyāw
\[ Kajr1.4 \] To/of ʿEbed

Although these fragments were found in different parts of building A (see fig. 2.1), it is interesting to speculate whether their function may have been related to that of \( Kajr1.2 \); but without clearer evidence this cannot be determined.\(^{30}\)

2.3. INSCRIPTIONS INCISED IN CLAY: \( Kajr2.1–2.28 \)

The inscriptions incised in clay fall into two classes: (1) those incised after firing (\( Kajr2.1–2.7 \)), and (2) those incised prior to firing (\( Kajr2.8–2.28 \)).

Four inscriptions incised after firing (\( Kajr2.1–2.3, \) and \( Kajr2.7 \)) are very fragmentary, consisting of only a few letters, possibly belonging to PNN, carved into the sides of storage jars. One of these (\( Kajr2.3 \)) includes a word beginning with \( lāmed \) (possibly a preposition), and it is possible that these names denote the owner of the vessel, or else the recipient, if the vessels were used for the delivery of goods. The archaic script on one vessel (\( Kajr2.2 \)) seems to predate the structures at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, which might indicate that it was brought to the site from elsewhere.\(^{31}\)

Four vessels \( Kajr2.4–2.6 \) were inscribed \( לשרער \) (restored in \( Kajr2.5: \) \( לשרער \), and \( Kajr2.6: \) \( לשרער \)), which is usually translated “to/of the

\(^{29}\) could conceivably be interpreted as a common noun: “for (the) servant (of)”; but comparison with \( Kajr1.1 \) and 1.3 suggests a PN.

\(^{30}\) William Dever, for example, referred to these as “votive bowls”; cf. William G. Dever, \( Did God Have a Wife: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel, \) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 196.

\(^{31}\) Meshel, \( Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), \) 79.
governor of the city” (lēšarʿîr).\textsuperscript{32} Aḥituv et al. compared this to a pair of 7\textsuperscript{th} century bullae from Jerusalem, which were stamped שראור (WSS 402), and likewise written scriptio continua and spelled defectively.\textsuperscript{33} However, the lack of the definite article in Kajr2.4–2.6 is surprising (see §3.2.2). All of the inscriptions appear to have been incised by the same person and are found on only one type of storage jar, which Etan Ayalon describes as a “bag-shaped jar with a plain rim” coated with a light-coloured slip.\textsuperscript{34} Petrographic analysis of a jar of this type suggested a point of origin in the region of Tel Miqne in the Shephelah.\textsuperscript{35}

The title “governor of the city” may be compared with several biblical examples where it appears to denote the highest municipal official (e.g. Judg 9:30; 1 Kgs 22:26 = 2 Chr 18:25; 2 Kgs 23:8; 2 Chr 34:8; 2 Chr 29:20).\textsuperscript{36} However, it is impossible to know whether the title refers to an individual stationed at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Assuming these vessels were used for provisioning the site, the title might reflect any stage of the distribution chain. But if the title did refer to someone at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, then

\textsuperscript{32} On the basis of the single published illustration available to him, Catastini suggested reading dālet instead of ‘ayin (i.e. שדרר “governor of the community”); however, based on the other two recently published examples, ‘ayin seems assured; cf. Alessandro Catastini, “Le Iscrizioni di Kuntillet ‘Ajrud e il Profetismo”, AION 42 (1982): 128.


\textsuperscript{34} Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 220.


\textsuperscript{36} Cf. the discussion of the title שְׂרֵהעיר in Nili Sacher Fox, In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah, (HUCM 23; Cincinnati, Oh.: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), 150–58. Fox concluded that שְׂרֵהעיר was “the title of the highest municipal administrator…but lesser classes of urban centers were undoubtedly administered by this class of official as well”. Of course, even if the title did not refer to an individual located at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, Kajr2.4–2.6 still indicate that the site was externally provisioned.
Kajr2.4–2.6 reinforce the impression that KuntilletʿAjrud may have ultimately fallen under royal (or at least remote) jurisdiction (cf. §4.7).³⁷

One of the vessels inscribed before firing contains only the letters יִל (Kajr2.8). If these inscriptions did serve as labels for delivery, then the fact that Kajr2.8 was incised prior to firing suggests that the vessel was made with the intended recipient in mind. But again it does not necessarily follow that this recipient was located at KuntilletʿAjrud, as it is possible that the vessel was reused and sent to the site secondarily (cf. Kajr2.2 above).

By far the most common class of inscriptions from KuntilletʿAjrud consists of only one or two letters: either אָלֶפ (Kajr2.12–2.23), יֹד (Kajr2.24–2.28), or in two (possibly three) instances כּוֹפ-רֶš (Kajr2.9–2.11).³⁸ These letters were incised before firing onto the shoulders of several large pithoi of similar size and shape. These were mainly found in the storerooms of Building A (see fig.2.1). Significantly, the clay from which these vessels were made suggests a point of origin in or around Jerusalem.³⁹

The meaning of the incised letters is unclear. The letters כּוֹפ-רֶš have been plausibly explained as an abbreviation of כּוֹפָן “sacrifice” (cf. two inscribed bowls which appear to have an abbreviation of קָדָש “holy,” found near the altar at Arad; and the vessels marked קָדָש at Ekron, see below), and may indicate that the vessel’s contents were to be set apart for sacrificial use.⁴⁰ Similarly, in keeping with his interpretation of the site as

³⁷ At the very least, as was observed to me by Andrew Pleffer, their presence can be taken as further evidence that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was connected to official administrative systems. ³⁸ Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 82–83. Note that there can be no question of reading כּוֹפ-דָאֶל, as in Kajr2.10 both the כּוֹפ and רֶש are formed separately. ³⁹ Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 82, 279–87; cf. Gunneweg, Perlman and Meshel, “The Origin of the Pottery of Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 270–83. ⁴⁰ Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 82; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., “Two Offering Dishes with Phoenician Inscriptions from the Sanctuary of ʿArad”, BASOR 235 (1979): 75–78; Yohanan Aharoni, Arad Inscriptions, (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), §102–103; Seymour Gitin, “Seventh Century B.C.E. Cultic Elements at
a religious settlement, Meshel has suggested that the ālep may represent offerings sent to Kuntillet 'Ajrud from the first or the best of the harvest.\textsuperscript{41} However, as Aḥituv et al. note, there is no comparable evidence for the use of letters to represent numbers in West Semitic inscriptions until the Hellenistic period.\textsuperscript{42} Moreover, this explanation is unlikely to extend to the yōd, since in this period we would expect the tithe to be indicated by the hieratic numeral 10, or by mēm (i.e. BH המש).\textsuperscript{43}

An alternative possibility is that ālep and yōd may be abbreviations for the vessels’ contents: i.e. ālep = אכל “grain,” and yōd = יין or יין “wine” (cf. the storage vessels marked שמן “oil” and דבל “cluster of figs” from Tel Miqne-Ekron).\textsuperscript{44} Comparable one-letter abbreviations, probably designating units of measure (e.g. šīn for “shekel” and bēt for “bath [measure]”) are attested in Iron Age texts from Arad, Ekron and Tell Ekron”, in \textit{Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, June–July, 1990} (eds. Avraham Biran, Joseph Aviram, and Alan Paris-Shadur; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1993), 250–58.


According to this explanation, it might be possible to interpret qōp-rēš as an abbreviation for קמח ראשא, or קמח ראשא "the first/best of the flour" (cf. קמח ראשא "the first flour" Arad 1:5–6, 7; דגן ראשיתם, "the first of their grain", Num 18:12; קרבן ראשית, "an offering of firstfruits", Lev 2:12). This interpretation is also consistent with the possibility of external provisioning (see §4.7). However, without knowing the contents of the vessels this must remain a conjecture.

While we may not be able to determine the meaning of these letters, it is significant that they were incised prior to firing. This, coupled with the apparent origin of these store-jars in Jerusalem, suggests that the vessels were manufactured and transported for a specific end-purpose.

2.4. InscriptiOns Written in Ink on clay: Kajr2.1–2.28

2.4.1. Two Letter Fragments

Among the texts written on the sides of the inscribed pithoi are two sets of epistolary formulae, consisting of the præscriptio and benediction. Comparison of the handwriting indicates that these inscriptions were probably written by two different scribes.46

45 Cf. מ–Arad 16.5; 65.1–2; 81.1; Qasile 2.2; נ–Arad 1.3; 2.2; 3.obv.2; 4.3; 5.12; 7.5; etc., see Ian Young, “Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions,” in Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology (ed. Ian Young; JSOTSup 369; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 299–300, §3.4.1.1; see also Dobbs-Allsopp, et al., Hebrew Inscriptions, 8, 9–10, 32, 34, 403, 404, etc. The interpretation of these letters as abbreviations for units of measure seems probable on the basis of comparison with the Ekron inscriptions, which include seven vessels marked נ (apparently bath) and two that were simply marked נ (apparently an abbreviation of the same); cf. Gitin, “Seventh Century B.C.E. Cultic Elements at Ekron”, 251; although, note that Gitin’s interpretation was apparently influenced by Aharoni’s interpretation of the Arad inscriptions, see p. 256, n.33.

46 This is suggested most strongly by comparison of the curved vertical shaft of the āleps in Kajr3.1 with the relatively straight vertical shaft of the āleps in Kajr3.6, and by the cursive “ticks” on the tail of the yōds in Kajr3.6, which are omitted in Kajr3.1. Of course,
2.4.1.1. *Kajr*3.1

The formula on pithos A (*Kajr*3.1) comprises two lines written with red ink immediately below the shoulder of the vessel between the two handles. This inscription is damaged, with a break where the sender’s name should be and a break, apparently not more than 14cm wide, immediately before the beginning of the blessing formula (where one would expect the recipient(s) to be named).

The inscription intersects with a drawing of two figures resembling the Egyptian dwarf-god “Bes”. There has been much discussion about the possible relationship between *Kajr*3.1 and the drawing: do the figures represent YHWH and his Asherah? This possibility was endorsed by Brian Schmidt, who argued that: “[t]he overlap of the inscription and the larger central figure’s headdress on pithos A is deliberate and meaningful, coincides with the composer’s application of overlapping elsewhere in these scenes and with what we presently know about ancient artistic technique more generally”. This may be so, but it not always clear on the inscribed pithoi where overlapping is deliberate and meaningful, and

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47 Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 87.
48 This fragment is unusual insofar as it names several recipients. Evidently at least one name has been lost in the lacuna but it is difficult to know whether there were others as well. Alternatively, the blessing may have been preceded by a welfare enquiry (e.g. השלם אתה אַתָּה) as in *Kajr*3.6, line 4. Note that the smaller fragment, bearing the words ברכת֯אתכם, was discovered separately from the rest of Pithos A, with the fragments of Pithos B (see below).
49 Cf. the discussion of Pirhiya Beck, who attributed the drawing and inscription to different hands; Beck, “The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet ‘Ajrud)”, 87.
50 Schmidt, “The Iron Age *Pithoi* Drawings from Horvat Teman”, 111.
where it is not. As such, I prefer to reserve judgement on this point.

1. Message of 'A[... friend of the k[ing], say to Yāhēlī, and to Yawašāh, and to[ ] I bless you

2. to YHWH of Samaria and to his asherah

A common North-West Semitic epistolary address formula, typically used in personal correspondence. There is some uncertainty as to the best interpretation of ṣamer. The second ṣamer in the sequence does not present any real difficulty and is easily understood as a simple imperative verb (ʾēmōr). The first ṣamer, however, may be vocalised

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51 Compare the overlapping of Kajr3.8 with the abecedaries on Pithos B, which in turn overlap Kajr3.6. While the abecedaries and Kajr3.6 might conceivably be correlated in a dedicatory context (see below), it is difficult to see how Kajr3.8 could relate. This gives the arrangement a somewhat chaotic appearance, suggesting that the placement of the drawings and inscriptions was ad hoc, determined by practical spatial considerations, as much as by design.

52 For an alternative interpretation of this scene, see Chapter 4.

53 Variations on this formula occur in a Hebrew papyrus palimpsest from Wadi Murabba‘at; an Edomite ostracan from Horvat ‘Uza; an Ammonite ostracan from Tell el-Mazar; and a Phoenician papyrus from Saqqara; cf. James M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (ed. Kent H. Richards; SBLWAW 14; Atlanta: SBL, 2003) 136–39, §67b–70, respectively.
either as a noun (ʾōmer), 54 “message, saying”, or as a verb in the suffix conjugation (ʾāmar), “he says, he has said”. 55

Shmuel Aḥituv understands ירא to be a noun, observing that “First Temple Hebrew normally did not begin a clause with the verb”. 56 However, it should be noted that this argument is influenced by the elevated registers of biblical prose and poetry, and we cannot be certain that these conventions are indicative of Hebrew usage in other contexts (i.e. different dialects, idiolects or registers).

The ambiguity surrounding ירא is further compounded by the fact that both the verbal and nominal interpretations find partial parallels in older Semitic epistolary formulae. Thus, the Ugaritic letters of the second millennium B.C.E. employ the noun–verb formula thm PN, l-PN rgm, “message of x, say to y”, 57 while the Akkadian formulae contain an imperative verb (as though addressed to the messenger) followed by umma (a deictic particle usually translated “thus”) + PN, 58 so that the verb of address is implied. This latter formula also bears a considerable resemblance to the biblical messenger formula, הראה כה “thus says ...”.


56 Aḥituv, Echoes from the Past, 316; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 90.


58 It is perhaps significant that this convention is particularly prevalent in the Western peripheral Akkadian formulae. That is, in the zone of interaction with the Northwest Semitic dialects Hawley, Studies in Ugaritic Epistolography, 102.
Given this variety, it is worth noting with Robert Hawley that each of these address formulae is at least formally, if not lexically parallel.\footnote{Hawley, Studies in Ugaritic Epistolography, 101–02.}

In light of this uncertainty, I have opted to follow the editio princeps in translating אפר as a noun solely for representational rather than semantic purposes.

\[ךַנ \ldots \] —The sender’s name. Damage to the vessel between the ʿālep and kāp means the intervening text is too badly effaced for confident reconstruction. However, traces of some letters remain. Following the ʿālep there is space for two or three letters before a long-shafted letter, either wāw or rēš (cf. the examples in line 2). Following this is a space for one letter before a probable hē, followed by a long-tailed letter that might be a mēm (cf. the mēm of וּשֶּׁר in line 2).\footnote{Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud, 87, 90, 135 n.3; Aḥituv, Echoes from the Past, 316; McCarter commented that “[t]hough the mem of the title cannot be seen in published visible-light photographs, it is clear in infrared images”; “Kuntillet ʿAjrud: Inscribed pithos 1”, translated by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. (COS 2.47A:171, n.1).}

Therefore, McCarter proposed the restoration אשיהו֯המלך, whom he identified as the Israelite king Joash (2 Kgs 13:9–13, etc.). McCarter argued that the spelling אשי, rather than יואש (cf. 2 Kgs 13:9), need not be considered a problem, as in several other instances the theophoric elements in royal names are reversed (cf. אחזיהו, 2 Kgs 8:24 = יהואחז, 2 Chron 21:17; ייוכינ, 2 Kgs 24:6 = יוכנייה, Jer 24:1).\footnote{Cf. “Kuntillet ʿAjrud: Inscribed pithos 1”, translated by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. (COS 2.47A:171, n.1). This suggestion might be supported by the PN אשייהו֯המלך (bearing the southern theophoric element, cf. §3.4) in the unprovenanced Moussāieff Hebrew Ostracon 1; see P. Bordreuil, F. Israel and D. Pardee, “King’s Command and Widow’s Plea: Two New Hebrew Ostraca of the Biblical Period”, Near Eastern Archaeology 61 (1998): 2–13; cf. Lindenberger, Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters, 109 and nn. c–e.} This restoration is plausible: Joash’s reign (ca. 802–787 B.C.E.) corresponds to the upper...
limit of the $^{14}$C determinations for Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and the establishment of an Israelite settlement in the eastern Sinai desert is broadly consistent with what we can infer about the historical circumstances of his reign (see §4.7). However, this restoration should be held lightly, not least because there appears to be traces of a letter between the long-shafted letter and the $hê$.

A stronger alternative was proposed by Na’aman, who restored the official title רע֯המלך, “friend of the king” (cf. 2 Sam 15:37; 16:16; 1 Kgs 4:5; Prov 27:10). Granted that the benediction names “YHWH of Samaria” (see below), the naming of a royal high official might be taken to suggest that the scribe copied an excerpt from an actual letter sent to the site. There is no reason to suppose that the official was himself present at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and as such, the impulse to copy the formulae might have been motivated by a desire to rehearse the formulae, or the script, or simply for the pleasure of writing. The first two alternatives are consistent with the possibility that education was conducted at the site.

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64 Nadav Na’aman, “The Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud Through the Lens of Historical Research”, UF 43 (2011): 302–03. This restoration leaves space for only 3–4 letters before the tile. As such, the sender is unlikely to be 'Amariyāw, the sender of Kajr3.6.

65 Alternatively, it might have been a draft of a letter sent back to Samaria by an official (i.e. the “friend of the king”) visiting the site. Either way, Kajr3.1 testifies to direct correspondence between Kuntillet 'Ajrud and the northern capital Samaria.

66 Although, Kajr3.1 might otherwise have been produced by a more experienced scribe (note the high standard of the handwriting) who wished to rehearse their skills.
A less convincing possibility is to restore wāw as a conjunction between the names of two senders (cf. Arad 40). However, in that case, it is difficult to know how to restore the second name. The conjectural theophoric PN יְהֹוָה מְלָכָה, "YHWH is king" (cf. Phoen. יְהֹוָה, KAI 4, which similarly compounds the noun מְלָכָה) is unlikely, as the theophoric element יה is never found at the beginning of PNN.

This blessing (1.c.s. piʿel, bēraktī) may be compared with blessings contained in the second letter fragment (Kajr3.6, line 5), Arad ostraca 16, 21, and 40, an Edomite ostracon from Ḫorvat ʿUza, and a Phoenician letter fragment from Saqqara (KAI 50). Note, however, that where each of these latter examples affix the pronominal suffix to the verb, in Kajr3.1 the suffix is affixed to the direct object marker. The variation attested in these blessings suggests that epistolary conventions were not merely static syntagms, but permitted a degree of stylistic flexibility.

The use of the perfect conjugation should be interpreted as the, so-called, “epistolary perfect”. Adapted from classical epistolography by Dennis Pardee, the term epistolary perfect denotes a class of verbs (often performatives) written in the suffix conjugation, and typically used self-referentially to describe acts relating to the writing and sending of the letter. From a morphological point of view, these verbs

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67 Cf. Benjamin Sass, “Personal Names and their Components”, in Nahman Avigad, *Corpus of West Semitic stamp Seals* (revised and completed by Benjamin Sass; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Israel Exploration Society, the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1997), 502.

68 These are reproduced with bibliographic details in Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, §60, 54, 51, 68 and 70, respectively.

69 Dennis Pardee, “The ‘Epistolary Perfect’ in Hebrew Letters”, *BN* 22 (1983): 34–40; Dennis Pardee and Robert M. Whiting, “Aspects of Epistolary Verbal usage in Ugaritic and Akkadian”, *BSOAS* (1987), 1–31. This classification, which was developed on analogy with classical epistolography, is purely descriptive (referring to a translation
assume the perspective of the receiver at the time of hearing or reading, rather than that of the sender at the time of writing or dictation.

Meshel initially interpreted שומר as a qal active participle (šomranū) meaning “our guardian”. However, most (including Meshel) now understand שומר to be a GN, “Samaria” (i.e. “YHWH of Samaria”), parallel to יהוה (טומן/ה), “YHWH of (the) Teman” (Kajr3.6, 3.9 and 4.1). Yet, some scholars advocate caution on the grounds that it is unusual to find a proper noun in the construct state (cf. GKC, §125d; Joüon, §131o; 137b). Nevertheless, the divine epithet YHWH of Samaria conforms exactly to a pattern (DN + GN) that is widely attested throughout ancient Semitic cultures; cf. the common biblical divine epithet יהוה צבאות “YHWH of Hosts”.

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71 For example, Dobbs-Allsopp, et al. suggest that here the tetragrammaton may be taken as an synonym for “God”. This can neither be affirmed nor disproved; Dobbs-Allsopp, et al., Hebrew Inscriptions, 291–92. Alternatively, Cross, noting the existence of parallel formulae with the locative particle -h, has suggested that the formulae should be translated DN at GN, where the locative particle is implicit. But, as Smith has argued, on the basis of the available evidence it does not necessarily follow that the unmarked formula implicitly corresponds to the explicit marked formula; Frank Moore Cross Jr., “Inscriptions in Phoenician and Other Scripts” in The Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon: Ashkelon I, Introduction and Overview (1985–2006) (eds. Lawrence E. Stager, J. David Schloen and Daniel M. Master; Winona Lake Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008). 338, n.58; cf. Mark S. Smith, “The Problem of the God and His Manifestations: The Case of the Baals at Ugarit, with Implications for Yahweh of Various Locales” in Die Stadt im Zwölffprophetenbuch (eds. Aaron Schart and Jutta Krispenz; BZAW 428; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 208, n.15.

Epigraphic Analysis of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Inscriptions

Notwithstanding the syntactic debate, there is a broad consensus that the function of the DN + GN formula serves to identify the deity as he was manifest in a particular place. But there has been considerable discussion about the theological implications, nonetheless: were YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of (the) Teman distinct local entities, or were they manifestations of a single transcendent deity?  

This question was recently taken up again by Jeremy Hutton with specific reference to the evidence from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Hutton’s discussion is cogent and his conclusion that both YHWH of Teman and YHWH of Samaria were venerated at the site as manifestations of a single deity who simultaneously led separate lives in the experience of worshippers, may be correct, as far as it goes, but it also falls short of the mark. Hutton’s characterisation of the invocation of יהוה الشمال in Kajr3.1 as “informal and ad hoc…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” fails to take into account the fact that both epithets occur in the context of epistolary formulae (Kajr3.1 and 3.6). It is surely significant that the


75 Hutton, “Local Manifestations of Yahweh”, 204.
only reference to YHWH of Samaria at Kuntillet ʿAjrud occurs in the context of a letter, and it makes little difference whether the text was transcribed onto the pithos as a dedication or some sort of writing exercise (see below). Furthermore, if the restoration כ[7]י is correct, then the original letter was, in all probability, sent to Kuntillet ʿAjrud from Samaria (or it is a mimicry of such a letter). The strong implication, then, is that the senders of the letters addressed the benediction to the manifestation of the deity associated with their local shrine (cf. Amos 8:14). Consequently, the evidence seems to presuppose that YHWH who was immanent in Samaria was also powerful in Teman, and vice versa, otherwise the blessing would be ineffectual and meaningless. In other words, in order for the benediction to be efficacious, it is reasonable to suppose that YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of Teman were one and the same.

In his discussion of the various manifestations of Baal at Ugarit, Benjamin Sommers observed, “Baal of the city Ugarit is Baal of the heavenly mountain Ṣaphon, but Baal of Ṣaphon is much more than Baal of Ugarit”.

Given the strong association of YHWH with the southern regions and the importance of this association for the location of the site (see §2.8.4), might a similar sentiment be inferred in regard to Kuntillet ʿAjrud? i.e. YHWH of Samaria is YHWH of Teman, but YHWH of the Teman is much more than YHWH of Samaria.

The complex issues surrounding the interpretation of אשראווה— that is, whether the term is the GN “Asherah”, or signifies a cultic object, “asherah”—are well known. Strong arguments have been advanced by both sides of the debate, and, as noted above, it is beyond

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the scope of the present study to resolve the question here. Nevertheless, several observations are in order.

First, given that both Baal and El appear to feature in addition to YHWH as DNN in the KAPT (see below), there is no a priori reason to doubt that Asherah might also have been venerated at the site.

Second, in this matter, appeals to the expected conventions of Semitic grammar are not entirely convincing. On the one hand, even if it is agreed that אשרתה should be interpreted as a DN, the precise nature of the relationship communicated by the pronominal suffix remains an open question; “consort” is a modern gloss. On the other hand, it is not clear that there is anything in either the biblical or epigraphic records that is strictly analogous to this syntagm. Both considerations make categorical statements difficult.

Be that as it may, I am inclined, for my part, to agree with those who understand אשרתה at Kuntillet ʿAjrud to be a common noun referring to a cult object, or, more precisely, some sort of cultic site or sanctuary

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77 Detailed surveys of this debate can be found in Emerton, “‘Yahweh and His Asherah’”, 315–37; Judith M. Hadley, The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

78 This point should be particularly stressed in response to Emerton’s analogical argument, seeking to supply a qualifying noun: e.g. “YHWH and his (wife) Asherah”; cf. Emerton, “‘Yahweh and His Asherah’”, 319–20. Others have made a similar point, while stressing the positive nature of the relationship between YHWH and Asherah; cf. the discussion in Schmidt, “The Iron Age Pithoi Drawings from Horvat Teman”, 106, 107, with references. Baruch Margalit went furthest when he attempted to identify אשרתה with the denominal Semitic root ʾṯr “trace, footstep”, which he interpreted metonymically to refer to “one who follows behind (viz. wife)”; Baruch Margalit, “Some Observations on the Inscription and Drawing from Khirbet el-Qôm”, VT 39 (1989): 374; however, he was unable to indicate any analogous examples.

79 The only possible exception is lʿnth in KTU 1.43 [CTA 33.13], which admits the same difficulties as אשרתה at Kuntillet ʿAjrud; cf. Emerton, “‘Yahweh and His Asherah’”, 322, 330.
The latter term, which is a precise orthographic equivalent to אָשָׁרָה at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, occurs in several first-millennium B.C.E. Phoenician and Punic inscriptions in contexts where אָשָׁרָה can only be understood to refer to some sort of cultic structure. Moreover, as Cross and others have noted, this term is a clear cognate of Akkadian asirṭu, “cella, sanctuary, socle, etc.” (CAD A ii: asirṭu, 436). Significantly, Akkad. asirṭu need not designate a temple or sanctuary only, but could apparently also designate a special room in a private house set apart for cultic purposes (CAD A ii: asirṭu 2, 439). Hence, the term seems to have had a relatively broad denotative range, but the principal connotation seems to relate to a sacred space admitting access to, and contact with, the deity. Though the nature and function of the structures at Kuntillet 'Ajrud are, as yet, undefined, the religious content of the plaster inscriptions seems to suggest some sort of cultic association, and as such the reference to "YHWH of (the) Teman and his אָשָׁרָה" may relate immediately to some part of the structures at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (see Chapter 4). However, this can only be a provisional hypothesis.

In my opinion, one of the greatest obstacles faced by those who would see אָשָׁרָה as a reference to the goddess is the difficulty in defining her role at the site. This can be framed as a question of agency. Jeffrey Tigay has argued that whereas in Kajr3.1 and 3.6 the blessing names both YHWH and his אָשָׁרָה/ה, in Kajr3.6, when the blessing is reiterated

in an explicit form, the verbs appear to be masculine and singular. Consequently, while both YHWH and his אשת/ה are named in the benediction, it is YHWH alone who is represented as the agent of blessing. This observation requires further refinement. It seems that in the orthography of the pithoi inscriptions final vowels were not marked for verbal conjugations (cf. ברכת for bēraktī, see the longer discussion in §3.2.1). Consequently, for both יִשַׁמר and יִהְיֶה it is impossible to know whether the underlying form is 3.m.s. (i.e. yišmorkā and yēhī) or 3.m.p. (i.e. yišmērûkā and yiḥyū). For יברך, however, there seems to be no alternative but to conclude that the underlying verbal form was the 3.m.s. yēbārekā, “may he bless you”. In this instance, the unusual orthography (cf. BH יברך) suggests that there has been a merger of the third radicle of the stem and the homophonic consonant of the pronominal suffix (i.e. יברך < יברך). This seems to imply that the underlying form was the 3.m.s. yēbāre(k)kā, rather than the 3.m.p. yibrē(k)kā, where the vowel in the penultima would have served to stabilise the syllable, preventing the assimilation of the kāp.


83 Of course, if Kajr3.6 was transcribed by sight, the orthography might also be explained by haplography. But it is nevertheless reasonable to suppose that visual copying was, at least in part, a process of internalisation; cf. the discussion of “synonymous variants” in Raymond F. Person Jr., “The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer” JBL 117 (1998): 604–08; Carr, Writing on the Tablet of the Heart, 41–44. In Kajr3.6 this seems assuredly to have been the case, as the irregular orthography of the address formula implies a cognitive, rather than visual, error (see below). Hence, phonological considerations are an important control, and the orthography continues to support the underlying yēbāre(k)kā, rather than yibrē(k)kā.
Inasmuch as only one of two named deities is active, no precise parallel exists for the blessing in *Kajr*3.6. The closest parallel for the formula occurs in the Phoenician letter from Saqqara (KAI 50): "I have blessed you to Baal Ṣaphon and all the gods of Tahpanhes may he/they make you well". But, on the basis of the Phoenician orthography, it is impossible to know whether the verb יָפֵעֵל is singular or plural. 84

In light of the morphological evidence of *Kajr*3.6, it is interesting to note that in the extant portion of *Kajr*4.1 (which also names both YHWH and his אָשֶרֶת/ה) it is again YHWH alone who conveys blessing (cf. 3.m.s. verbs יִהְבֶּט הִיצֶּב in line 2). Similarly, in the only certain example of a dedicatory inscription, *Kajr*1.2, YHWH is named but not his אָשֶרֶת/ה (although it is possible that this inscription is incomplete, see above). 85 Hence, at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, we must conclude that the אָשֶרֶת/ה (whatever it was) was probably not considered an agent of blessing, or else that the active role of the אָשֶרֶת/ה was comparatively limited. Of course, it does not necessarily follow from this that אָשֶרֶת/ה was not a goddess worshiped at the site. There are analogous instances known from the Ugaritic literary corpus in which blessing is conveyed from a

84 The same is true of KAI 102 and 105, which were discussed in Emerton, "‘Yahweh and His Asherah’", 320–21. One intriguing piece of evidence, also discussed by Emerton, is KAI 79, a Punic votive inscription offered to לָרַבְתֶּת חַמְמוֹן לָרַבְתֶּת תָּנִית לָבָאל לָבָאל "to the/my lady, to Tannit, the face of Baal, and to the/my lord, to Baal Ḥammon", in which blessing is sought of the goddess alone, indicated by the 3.f.s jussive וְתַכְּא. However, as Emerton himself admits, in KAI 79 the actual blessing is not addressed to both deities, and, as such, is not directly comparable with the blessings at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

85 In light of the apocopated form of the tetragrammaton in *Kajr*1.2, it may be that the inscription was incomplete. But there is no evidence for this, and the exceptional nature of the object—in particular, the inordinate labour that must have been involved with transporting it to the site—rather testifies against this possibility that the inscription would be left unfinished. The fragmentary nature of the inscriptions on the other stone vessels renders them useless for comparative purposes.
chief deity on behalf of the pantheon (cf. KTU 1.15 II. 14–20). But it is nonetheless a problem for those who wish to identify the settlement at Kuntillet ʿAjrud principally with the cult of Asherah (cf. §4.8).

But if אשה/ה is thus deprived of agency—or, at least, if that agency is diminished—what might the expression ליוה...אשה/ה mean? To begin with, it should be noted that, in the past, the four iterations of this expression at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Kajr3.1, 3.6, 3.9, 4.1) have typically been treated somewhat homogeneously. This homogeneity is based on the assumption that each iteration represents some form of prayer or benedictory invocation. However, as will be discussed below, this assumption might not be justified in every instance. In fact, in only two of the four iterations (Kajr3.1 and 3.6) is the verb ברך actually used, and both instances reflect the conventions of a clearly defined epistolary tradition. In the other two instances it is יהוה and his אשה/ה who appear to be the recipients of something offered; in Kajr3.9 this might be some sort of hymn sung to the deity (cf. §2.4.2), while in Kajr4.1 this is the missing object of the verb נתן (cf. §2.6.1). This might tip the balance in favour of translating אשה/ה as a DN, but a parallel for the practice of dedicating something to a sanctuary can be adduced from the offertory inscriptions from Ekron which read לאשה/ה and למקים לאשה/ה. It might be objected that these inscriptions could, in fact, be interpreted as delivery instructions, identifying the intended destination of the vessel and its

87 I exclude the reference to YHWH and his אשה/ה in the Kh. el Qom inscription from the current discussion for two reasons: (1) I don’t believe that the syntax and structure of the latter are yet sufficiently well understood to serve as a basis for detailed comparison—particularly in regard to the need to translate the preposition as some sort of agentive particle. Though there is some evidence for such usage in BH, in those cases the particle always refers to a passive verb (cf. Williams §280); (2) the reference to YHWH in the Kh. el Qom inscription differs from the Kuntillet ʿAjrud formulae insofar as it is not qualified by a toponym.
contents. However, several of the vessels from Ekron were inscribed with the word קדש, including one on which the word קדש is paired with the designation לאשרת. This would seem to imply that the vessels and/or their contents were set apart as “holy” for the לאורת. While Ekron admits many of the same difficulties of interpretation as לאורת at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, no such ambiguity attends לאורת, and the latter can safely be interpreted as designating an offering to the sanctuary. Consequently, in at least one independent source, there is relatively certain evidence of something being offered to a shrine or sanctuary. Of course, a similar case can be made if לאורת is interpreted as some sort of symbol or object, as there is abundant evidence for “votive” offerings being deposited with the image of a god.

So, what of the epistolary formulae in Kajr3.1 and 3.6? In light of the possibility that לאורת should be interpreted as a cult place, it is somewhat tempting to translate the expression: “I have blessed you to YHWH at his sanctuary”. But this is not entirely satisfactory. While it may be possible to alleviate the problem of agency by translating the preposition as the locative “at” rather than the indirect object “to”, and while this interpretation might be consistent with the possibility that the pithoi inscriptions were themselves offerings devoted on behalf of a third party (see below), the difficulty lies in the fact that the two prepositions are coordinated by means of the wāw conjunction. A

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89 Cf. Gitin, “Seventh Century B.C.E. Cultic Elements at Ekron”, 250–58. See also the discussion in Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monthesim: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), 73. Comparison should also be made to Ps. 68:24 (Heb.25), where MT בקדש is rendered τον αἵρετο by the LXX, presumably on analogy with Heb. שורת. Although, cf. Hofijzer and Jongeling “jourd”, in *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* 2:994. However, in this instance, the pairing with לאורת seems to preclude the translation קדש = “sanctuary”.


91 Or even the more speculative, “I have blessed you to Yhwh (by dedicating something on your behalf) at his sanctuary”; cf. נתן, Kajr4.2.
straightforward reading of this syntagm seems to require that both
prepositions be translated as the indirect object of the verb בְּרָכָה.
Accordingly, as others have done before, it might be better to
understand the אָסָרְת/ה in Kajr3.1 and 3.6 as being, in some sense, a
mechanism of the divine blessing.\(^{92}\) It is not immediately clear what
this could mean, but in this case, as in everything, we must follow the
evidence where it leads.

In short, no single interpretation of the expression לְיהוָה אֶלֶּאָסָרְת/ה has
proved wholly convincing and it seems that most arguments are limited
to demonstrating the plausibility their preferred alternative. Ultimately,
however, it matters little for the present study whether אָסָרְת/ה is
understood as a common noun or a proper noun. But, if the latter, it
must be stressed that at Kuntillet ʿAjrud the goddess appears to be of
secondary importance to YHWH.

2.4.1.2. Kajr3.6

The fragment on pithos B (Kajr3.6) was also written with red ink below
the shoulder of the vessel. This inscription comprises ten short lines
bordered by a vertical margin on the right-hand side adjacent to a handle.
This inscription is relatively well preserved but some lines present
difficulties owing to their intersection with various other fragmentary
inscriptions and the partially drawn figure of a cow.\(^{93}\)

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\(^{93}\) Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 92–94, 157.
1. Message of
2. ʾAmariyāw,
3. say to my lord
4. are you at peace?
5. I bless you to
6. YHWH of Teman
7. and to his asherah. May he
8. bless you, and may he keep you,
9. and may he be with my
10. Lord

—See above (Kajr3.1).

—Note the separation of the preposition from the noun. This may reflect a cognitive error on the part of the scribe, suggesting that, in this instance, the verb and preposition were conceived as a linguistic unit. This sort of reflexive error is understandable in the context of rote memorisation of a formula in which the PN was a variable; i.e. “say to” + PN(N). By way of contrast, in the conventional phrase ברכה ליהוה “I bless you to/by YHWH” (line 5), where the object of the verb was fixed formulaically, the preposition is affixed to the noun in the conventional manner. This may be an indication that Kajr3.6 was written as an (educational) exercise by an inexperienced scribe.

—A welfare enquiry: “are you well/at peace?” An identical welfare enquiry occurs in the Edomite letter from Ḥorvat ʿUza, while a similar expression שלם את, “are you well/at peace?”, without the interrogative particle, also occurs in the Ammonite letter from Tell el-Mazar and the Phoenician letter from Saqqara (KAI 50).

—1.c.s. piʿel, “epistolary perfect”, with second person pronominal suffix (bëraktīkā; cf. ברכה אתכם, Kajr3.1).

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94 Cf. §2.2.1.
95 In modern terms this is equivalent to writing “Dear, x” rather than “Dear x,”.
This benediction is reminiscent of the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24–26; cf. Ps 67:2 and the two 6th century B.C.E. silver amulets from Ketef Hinnom. Reference should also be made to the seventh century B.C.E. dedicatory inscription from Ekron, which contains a feminine counterpart for the blessing: יהוה ותשתרא, “may she bless him, and protect him, and prolong his days, and bless his [l]and”. Evidently, these blessings were influenced by a common North-West Semitic benedictory tradition.

Bilhah Nitzan has demonstrated that the priestly blessing became the archetypal blessing adapted throughout much ancient Hebrew literature, and while this is the only known instance of its use in an epistolary

97 Naveh read שמרן, qal active participle, “our guardian”, (see above), which he understood to be semantically parallel to זכר in the problematic third line of the inscription from Kh. el-Qôm. But the suggestion that שמרן can be read in Kajr3.6 line 6 seems unlikely. In particular, it is highly doubtful that the third letter in this word is רכש (of which there are several clear examples in lines 2, 3 and 5), and the most probable reading remains נון.


99 Cf. Gitin, Dothan and Naveh, “A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron”, 1–16. Clearly elements of this benedictory formula were both ancient and wide spread.
context, its inclusion here indicates that it was not limited to literary or liturgical contexts only.\textsuperscript{100}

Finally, it is interesting to note that this letter is addressed to an individual of higher status, identified only as “my lord”. As such, the more effusive blessing might be understood as a deferential gesture.\textsuperscript{101}

The function of these inscriptions has been much discussed, but they are widely believed to have served some sort of votive or dedicatory function. In an early study, Joseph Naveh suggested that the epistolary formulae may have been appropriated by a donor who wished to make a dedication on behalf of a third party.\textsuperscript{102} This may well be correct, but, if so, it is not


\textsuperscript{101} The address of the recipient by the epithet “my lord” is unusual among the רם letters, which tend to use PNN. Typically this formula seems to be used in correspondence between individuals of relatively equal social status, marked by the inclusion of kinship terms (cf. the letters from Saqqara and Tell el Mazar) and the absence of other titles or epithets. \textit{Kajr} 3.6 is the only known example in which this formula is demonstrably addressed to a superior.

\textsuperscript{102} Joseph Naveh, “Graffiti and Dedications”, \textit{BASOR} 235 (1979): 29. To support this suggestion Naveh cited two parallels. The first, a fragmentary Phoenician inscription incised before firing into the side of a storage vessel from Sarepta in modern-day Lebanon, consisting of a partial abecedary (note the comparable collocation of \textit{Kajr} 3.6 and abecedaries on Pithos B), followed by: [ץ aspire לאלת]ן [רמך], “say to our lord Germelqar[t]”; cf. James B. Pritchard, \textit{Sarepta: A Preliminary Report on the Iron Age}, (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1975), 99–100. However, as was discussed by the editors of the Sarepta fragment, it is possible that לאלת belongs to a PN, rather than an epistolary formula. Furthermore, there is no hint of a comparable abecedary associated with \textit{Kajr} 3.1. Note also that the abecedaries on Pithos B were written in multiple hands, while the epistolary formula is addressed to a single individual, who is, in any case, unnamed. It is difficult to see how these elements can be reconciled with Naveh’s theory. Naveh’s second parallel was the Thamudic graffiti, \textit{l-X wdlr llt Y w-Z... “By X. And may you, Allat, remember Y, Z, etc.”}; cf. Naveh, “Graffiti and Dedications”, 29.
clear why the verb(s) of address should be retained, or why the scribe
would have chosen to appropriate the epistolary formulae rather than adapt
a more direct benedictory formula as attested in Kajr1.2.\textsuperscript{103}

Others, such as William Dever, suppose a dedicatory function on the
basis of the proximity of the inscribed pithoi to the bench-room.\textsuperscript{104} But
this is a tenuous argument. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the function
of the bench-room is far from certain, and, in any case, the fact remains
that only Pithos A was discovered inside the bench-room, while Pithos B
was discovered in the courtyard, on the other side of a wall.\textsuperscript{105} In fact,
there is absolutely no evidence connecting Pithos B directly with the
bench-room.\textsuperscript{106} Furthermore, given that a large fragment of Pithos A was

\textsuperscript{103} This objection is strengthened when considered in light of the inscription discovered in
a cave near en Gedi which appears to contain a series of blessings, in which ברך (most
likely passive participles; cf. Kajr1.2) is repeated in each instance on a new line before
the name of a desired beneficiary, thereby testifying to the versatility of the basic ברך
\textsuperscript{104} Dever, Did God Have a Wife, 128.
\textsuperscript{105} Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 33.
\textsuperscript{106} Etan Ayalon observed that “[i]n light of the large concentration of pithoi in the two
store-rooms, it is extraordinary that the two complete pithoi decorated with drawings and
inscriptions were placed as they were: one in the Bench-room and the other in the nearby
northeastern corner of the courtyard”; Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 240. I do
not deny that the placement of the pithoi is remarkable; however, the vessels themesleves
are extraordinary precisely by virtue of being inscribed. The adornment of the vessels
with drawings and inscriptions sets them apart from the uninscribed pithoi (although note
that inscribed Pithois C does not seem to have warranted special treatment) and testifies
to the fact that they served some sort of secondary function (i.e. beyond that of storage). It
requires an interpretative leap to view these as religious objects. Furthermore, as I will
discuss below, the inscriptions may plausibly be explained as writing exercises and
ordinary administrative documents. As such, their location in the courtyard and the
bench-room may reflect the function of those spaces in the daily activities of the
settlement, suggesting that they were not segregated for cultic use. Therefore, since the
case for the religious function of both the bench-room and the vessels has often been
interconnected, if the inscribed pithoi can be interpreted apart from a religious
explanation, then the implications for the use of space as a whole should be re-examined.
actually discovered in the courtyard (not the bench-room!) together with
the fragments of Pithos B, there are serious grounds for doubting a primary
(functional) association between the bench-room and the inscribed
pithoi.\footnote{Importantly, the fragment from Pithos A bears the inscription יברככם (from Kajr3.1), which further problematises a specifically dedicatory association for the epistolary formulae. If the formulae had a dedicatory function and/or numinous power, why was this fragment deposited in the putative favissa (see §4.4.3)? On the location of the fragment, see Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 33–34.}

More importantly, neither Naveh nor Dever have sufficiently
accounted for the variety of the inscriptions found on both pithoi. These
include a number of sweeping pen strokes on Pithos A, which are difficult
to understand as anything other than an exercise, or trials of a pen (see
further below)—such scribblings are difficult to reconcile with the view
that the pithoi served a special religious function.\footnote{This same conclusion was reached by the editors; see Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 134. Although, it should be noted that this may still be consistent with Schmidt’s proposal that the vessels were originally used for drafts, and that their sanctification was a secondary development (see below).}

These considerations combine to suggest that that Kajr3.1 and 3.6
were produced as practice exercises. In view of the fact that both sides of
the correspondence between a superior(s) and his subordinates is
represented (Kajr3.1 and 3.6 respectively), the formulae may be compared
to the terse 'ל + PN formulae in the requisition slips at Arad, and the
deferential formulae addressed to a superior at Lachish.\footnote{Cf. Pardee, Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters, 146.}

The use of the אמר formula at Kuntillet 'Ajrud suggests something closer to parity
between the correspondents and testifies to the (semi)official nature of
settlement and the high esteem in which it was regarded (see §4.8.1).
2.4.2. A possible hymn to YHWH: Kajr3.9

This three line inscription on pithos B is situated to the left of Kajr3.6, immediately above a drawing of a procession of “worshippers”. The letters are written with red ink in a controlled hand. The beginnings of the first two lines have been effaced, although traces of some letters remain.

1. ] to YHWH of the Teman and to his asherah
2. ] all that he asks from God, he (god) favours! And if he entreats, YHWH will give to him
3. According to his desire

The wording of line 1 is reminiscent of the epistolary formulae on pithoi A and B (Kajr3.1 and Kajr3.6). However, Aḥituv et al. estimate that there is only space for about 15 letters at the beginning of this line, and it is, therefore, unlikely to have consisted of a full epistolary formula, which even in its most basic form would be too long for the inclusion of proper names; e.g. PN אמור ברכתי PN+ לוכבד. Even so, based on the affixation of the preposition

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110 For the interpretation of this scene, see the detailed discussion in Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 173–77.
111 Specifically, the ל preposition with the DNN.
112 Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 100.
113 Given that proper names (or epithets, in the case of Kajr3.6) are included in the other epistolary formulae from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, there is no reason to believe they would be
to the DN (cf. *Kajr*1.2, *Kajr*3.1 and *Kajr*3.6), one might be justified in reconstructing some kind of blessing (cf. *Kajr*3.1, *Kajr*3.6, or *Kajr*1.2).\(^{114}\)

But there are other difficulties in interpreting this text as an epistolary or benedictory formula. First, in contrast to the present text, it was usual for the authors of first millennium B.C.E. North-West Semitic letters to transition from the third person to the first or second person immediately after the *praescriptio* and *benediction*.\(^{115}\) Second, the panegyric to YHWH, in the second and third lines (although conceivably and extension of the benediction) is, to the best of my knowledge, unparalleled in epistolary or benedictory formulae.

omitted in this instance. As such, the same objection would apply if one attempted to restore an alternative verbal formula; e.g. *שלח/Shelah PN ברכות PN* (cf. Arad 16, 21, 40). The one possible exception is the Hebrew palimpsest from Wadi Muraba’at (papMur 17a), in which the recipient’s name is replaced by a simple pronoun: יהו֯לך א מ ר perhaps because the recipient was named in an address line on the outside of the papyrus (cf. KAI 50). However, papMur 17a is the sole attestation of this formula, and on the basis of *Kajr*3.1 and 3.6, it seems *a priori* preferable to restore the full nominal formula (see below). On the other hand, the shorter prepositional formula known from the Arad and Lachish ostraca (e.g. אליי, Arad 1) are also to be ruled out as they are never accompanied by blessing formulae.

\(^{114}\) Cf. Meshel, *Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 100; 127.

\(^{115}\) Cf. the examples cited above. The only exception is the 6th century Ammonite letter fragment from Tell el-Mazar in which the sender Pelet refers to the recipient in the third person as “his brother (אבד-אל) Ebed-el”. However, in the *praescriptio* and *benedictio* of the Canaanite letters it is usually customary for the sender to refer to the recipient in the first person; e.g. אמר laחתי Arishut “say to my sister Arishut” KAI 50. The anomalous example from Tell el-Mazar is best explained either on the basis the use of the third person reflects the perspective of the scribe commissioned to write the letter and is a continuation of the scribal voice represented in the *אמר* formula; or that it facilitated the delivery of the letter to a third party; for an analogous Greek formula, see Stephen R. Llewelyn, “The εἰς (τὴν) οἰκίαν Formula and the Delivery of Letters to Third Persons or Their Property”, *ZPE* 101 (1994): 71–78.
Be that as it may, epistolary formulae are not the only context in which the preposition + DN construction is found. The same construction frequently occurs in the Psalter; cf. הוהי ליהוה בכנה ב才算 ששר מפורזל “Give praise to YHWH with a lyre; play for him with a ten-stringed harp” (Ps 33:2); שומרי תאריך שרי לאלים זמרו אבניל הוהי “Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; sing to the lord, Selah” (Ps 68:32 [Heb.33]); הוהי ליהוה иметь בכנור בניו כעשרז מנהר “Give praise to Yhwh, for he is good, for his love endures forever. 2Give praise to the God of gods, for his love endures forever. 3Give praise to the lord of lords, for his love endures forever” (Ps 136:1–3). One alternative, therefore, is to interpret Kajr3.9 as a portion from a hymn-like composition, and to reconstruct a verb of praise or adoration before the DN.

Significantly, the eulogistic style of the second and third lines also finds parallels in the psalms (e.g. Ps 23:1–5; 54:4–5; 68:32–35; 136:1–26), and, consequently, this suggestion allows for a greater consistency in register and style both within the inscription itself and within the corpus of inscriptions from Kuntillet `Ajrud more broadly.

If the above interpretation is correct, it might be possible to restore the first section along the lines: הוהי ליהוה לאלים זמרו [הוהי ליהוה] “Give praise to God; sing to YHWH of the Teman and to his Asherah ...”, or [שומרי תאריך ליהוה] “Let a man praise God; let him sing to YHWH of the Teman and to his Asherah...” The latter reading may be preferable insofar as it introduces the otherwise unidentified subject of the second line.

116 Note that El, YHWH and Baal seem to be named in the context of parallelismus membrorum in Kajr4.2.

117 That is, a hip'il 3.m.s. jussive (*yōd) יָדָה; cf. the examples from the Psalter cited above. Note that defective orthography seems to have been the norm at Kuntillet `Ajrud (cf. §3.2.1).
As Ahituv et al. noted, the presence of the definite article suggests that the toponym תַּמְן refers to a geographical region rather than a city (cf. תַּמְן in Kajr4.1). McCarter suggested restoring ašer הלא, which he translated, “and may he grant all that he asks…” (sic.). The subject of the 3.m.s. impf. הלא is unknown.

Many, including Ahituv et al., follow Moshe Weinfeld and read מַאֲשַׂ from a man’. However, McCarter, noting that the šîn is unclear, suggested restoring lamed, and reading מַאֲשַׂ חָנָן as a nominal construct “the compassionate god”; cf. the second Khirbet Beit Lei cave inscription and the expression אלה רוחם וחנן “the gracious and compassionate God” (Exod 34:5). The difficulty with this reading, however, is that it leaves the pronoun חָנָן without a verbal or nominal complement. As such, it might be preferable to translate the expression חָנָן as a refrain, comparable to the Islamic takbîr, i.e. “whatever he asks of God (gracious is he!)…” (cf. the refrain “his love endures forever” in Ps 136, cited above).

122 While this portion occurs in a very faded section of the line, traces of ‘ālep and hê may be faintly seen and the following word הלא is contextually assured.
Then again, Ahituv et al. interpreted חנן as a qal active participle (ḥōnēn—cf. Ps 37:21, 26; 112:5), and the pronoun as functioning in a casus pendens construction referring back to испро, i.e. “whatever he asks of a man, that man who had been asked, will give him generously”.\(^{123}\)

Perhaps a preferable interpretation, however, is to understand חנן as a subordinate clause with a gnomic perfect; i.e. “whatever he asks from God, he (God) favours”.\(^{124}\)

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\(^{123}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 98–100.

\(^{124}\) An alternative, speculative, possibility is that חנן functions as an inverted perfect coordinated with ישאל; i.e. “he will favour”; cf. Joüon and Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 357–60, §117. Joüon argued for the development of an inverted qatal form (marked by the inversion of the stress), on the analogy of the punctiliar preterite yiqtol (i.e. yiqtol indicating a single occurrence of action in past time rather than habitual or repeated events or actions), and the postulated proto-Semitic jussive-preterite: “Then, by analogy, a form like qatalti “I killed” would have become qatalti “I shall kill” (by inversion of the stress), which may be preserved in w-qatalti” (Joüon §117c); cf. Robert Hetzron, “The Evidence for Perfect *Y’aqtul and *Yaqt’ul in Proto-Semitic”, *JJS* 14 (1969): 1–21. If this inference is correct, then it should be at least plausible for an unmarked qatal imperfect to exist as a relic. While this possibility should be qualified by the observation that the inversion is not grammatically marked, it should also be noted that this interpretation is functionally extended in most translations to be a precative perfect (cf. 1 Sam 24:15; 2 Sam 7:29; Lam 1:21; 3:5); cf. Sandra L. Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*, (SBLRBS 23; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 415.

If Kajr3.9 is interpreted as an excerpt from a hymnic composition extolling YHWH’s munificence, the question remains as to how we might account for its inclusion among the various texts and images on pithos B. In Egypt, where the numinous properties of writing seem to have been particularly developed, there is abundant evidence for the depositing of inscribed songs in cultic contexts. In those contexts, it may reasonably be inferred that the songs functioned as a form of prayer offered perpetually before the deity (see Appendix B), and it may be that a similar function could be extended to Kajr3.9; although, it should be noted that in the Egyptian examples the songs are usually reproduced in full. Then again, David Carr has argued convincingly for the special place of psalms and songs in the context of the ancient educational curricula, and it may be that Kajr3.9, too, was a practice exercise. Such an interpretation accords well with the colocation of abecedaries, letter formulae, and other possible writing

129 See for example the hymns in Miriam Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature: New Kingdom (vol. 2 of Ancient Egyptian Literature; Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1976), 81–113.
exercises on the pithoi (e.g. Kajr3.5, 3.15), and supports the inference that scribal education was conducted at the site. Alternatively, Kajr3.9 might be nothing more than an idle jotting.

Finally, if Kajr3.9 is, in fact, some sort of hymnic composition, then it may be possible, in at least this one instance, to identify a direct relationship between a drawing (i.e. the processional immediately below the inscription) and one of the texts. If so, the composite scene (including both text and drawing) might have been inspired by an actual ritual witnessed at the site (see §4.8).

2.4.3. The Abecedaries Kajr3.11–3.14

Four partially preserved abecedaries were also included among the inscriptions on pithos B. These lie adjacent to (and partly intersect with) Kajr3.6 and the handle of the vessel. Two of the abecedaries (Kajr3.12 and Kajr3.14) were written in red ink, in a skilled hand and stylised script, which is characterised by the elegant and controlled curve on the downstrokes of the kāp, mêm, nûn and pê.\textsuperscript{131} The other two (Kajr3.11 and Kajr3.13) were written in black ink in a less flamboyant script.\textsuperscript{132}

Despite their partial preservation, the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud abecedries occupy an important place in discussions about the standardisation and diffusion of the competing linear alphabetic sequences in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age Levant.\textsuperscript{133} In three of the abecedaries (Kajr3.12, Kajr3.13 and Kajr3.14)—the relevant portion of Kajr3.11 has not been

\textsuperscript{131} Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 102.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 102.

preserved) the letter sequence follows the defunct pê-ʿayin order known from the 12th century abecedary from ‘Izbet Šarţah, certain biblical acrostic poetry (Lam 2:16-17; 3:46-51; 4:16-17; Ps 10:6-8; Prov 31:25-26 [LXX]) and, most recently, the abecedary found at Tel Zayit.134 This pê-ʿayin sequence stands in contrast to the ʿayin-pê sequence which later rose to prominence in post-exilic Hebrew, and supports the growing impression that the pê-ʿayin sequence was in wide-spread and common use throughout the Iron Age. In addition to the pê-ʿayin sequence, it is interesting to note the relative positioning of the sāmek and the pê in the second and fourth abecedaries (Kajr3.12 and Kajr3.14). The height of these letters relative both to one another, and to the other letters in the line, conform to a pattern that Christopher Rollston has argued is characteristic of the Old Hebrew cursive tradition. That is, the sāmek is typically written above the ceiling line while the pê is written noticeably lower, this is especially so when sāmek-pê are written in sequence, with the result that the pê fits neatly under the bottom left-hand lateral stroke of the sāmek.135 Ryan Byrne has taken this observation one step further. Noting that this phenomenon does not appear to be reproduced in any of the neighbouring Aramaic or transjordanian script traditions, Byrne reasonably concluded that the relative positioning of sāmek and pê may be indicative of a distinctly Hebrew pedagogical tradition in which the letters were learnt through repetition according to the sequence sāmek-pê-ʿayin.136

136 Byrne, “The Refuge of Scribalism in Iron I Palestine”, 5; cf. Rollston, “Scribal Education in Ancient Israel”, 58–59; Sanders, “Writing and Early Iron Age Israel”, 102. This does not automatically mean that all abecedaries are necessarily pedagogical aids. For a well-argued critique of the reflex to associate abecedaries with scribal education see
The question remains as to what relationship (if any) existed between the abecedaries? Given that the abecedaries appear to be written in series by at least two different hands, it is tempting to assume that these are pedagogical exercises, in which a teacher has written a text for their pupil(s) to copy. Alternatively, Naveh suggested that the abecedaries should be understood in connection with Kajr3.6 and served a dedicatory function (see §2.4.1). But under this explanation it is difficult to account for repetition of the abecedaries in multiple hands. Then again,

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Menahem Haran, “On the Diffusion of Literacy and Schools in Ancient Israel,” in Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986 (ed. John A. Emerton; Jerusalem: Leiden: Brill, 1988), 81–95. However, Byrne goes too far when he suggests (albeit cautiously) that it may be possible to infer from the presence of the pē-ʿayin reflex alongside the northern theophoric name Ṣmaryaw (Kajr3.6) that there was particular a northern preference for the pē-ʿayin sequence; Byrne, “The Refuge of Scribalism in Iron I Palestine”, 5, n.19. In addition to Byrne’s caveat regarding the methodological flaw of equating the scribe’s dialect with that of the named party (Ṣmaryaw), it is by no means certain that Kajr3.6 and the abecedaries were composed by the same scribe. At the very least they appear to have been written at different times, and probably by more than one individual. Cumulatively, the evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud seems to suggest that the site was primarily occupied by inhabitants from the northern kingdom of Israel (see §3.7), but it would be precipitous to presume that every text at the site reflects northern conventions.

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Note that it is Kajr3.1 (which is not accompanied by abecedaries), rather than Kajr3.6, which names multiple recipients. Naveh’s attempt to associate the formulae and abecedaries would be greatly strengthened if this were reversed.
Menahem Haran raised the possibility that such abecedaries might have held no more significance than the simple pleasure of writing: “it is also possible that sometimes the engraver or inscriber, for whom writing was still something of an adventure and a bit of a thrill, felt like scribbling the letters of the alphabet for no particular reason. The empty space of the writing surface and the fact that the engraver already had the necessary implement in his hand may have also enticed him into jotting down all the writing signs, that is, the letters of the alphabet as they were known to him”.\(^{139}\) This suggestion accords well with the elegant calligraphy of Kajr3.12 and Kajr3.14. Ultimately, however, the concentration of other possible education/practice texts on the two pithoi lends weight to the pedagogical hypothesis.\(^{140}\)

### 2.4.4. The Vertical Strokes

Intersecting with an image of a suckling calf on pithos A are 10 broad vertical strokes arranged in a triangular pattern. These may be some form of tally (perhaps related to the provisioning of the site; cf. Kajr3.8 below), but at present their significance is unclear:

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׀׀׀׀׀׀׀׀׀■
■■■■■■■■■■
■■■■■■■■■■
■■■■■■■■■■
■■■■■■■■■■
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\(^{140}\) A more nuanced view, that takes account of the high standard of the handwriting, might be that the abecedaries were produced by an experienced scribe, rehearsing their skill or experimenting with different scripts.
2.4.5. The Remaining Inscriptions Written in Ink on Clay

The remaining ink on clay inscriptions consist mainly of short and apparently disconnected pieces, most of which are extremely fragmentary and difficult to interpret. At least some of these appear to contain personal names (e.g. *Kajr*3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.7; 3.17). One inscription on pithos B (*Kajr*3.10) contains a list of six names written adjacent to a handle (immediately to the left of *Kajr*3.9). Four of the names in this list bear the theophoric ending -יו (see §3.4), one, אמצ, is probably parallel to the biblical name אמוץ, “Amos”, while the sixth and final name, מצרי, “Egyptian”, may be either an epithet or a personal name.

One truncated inscription (*Kajr*3.8) reads ה.שמרןשעם (“h. Samaria barley”). This was written between the abecedaries on pithos B; although it is not clear which was prior. Ahituv et al. compared *Kajr*3.8 to the so-called “Barley Ostracon” from Samaria and the “Shepherd’s Ostracon”, which include references to measures of barley; however, they note that due to the lack of context it is impossible to determine the relationship between the nouns שעם and שערם, “barley”. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, it is tempting to restore a numeral as part of a list or tally; e.g. שלשך שערם, “[thre]e (consignments of) Samaria Barley”. Yet on the

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141 *Kajr*3.17 was actually written on the side of a jar, and, other than the KAPT, is the only ink inscription from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud that was not written on one of the three inscribed pithoi; Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 104.
142 Cf. two Moabite seals from the 8th–7th centuries (WSS 1007, 1018).
143 Ahituv et al. argue that at some point before the 7th century the epithet מצרי appears to have become a relatively common personal name. מצרי is also attested as a PN in Ugaritic and Phoenician; see Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 100–01.
basis of known parallels, if Kajr3.8 was part of a list, we might expect the scribe to use hieratic numerals rather than writing the number alphabetically.\footnote{Cf. Rollston, “Scribal Education in Ancient Israel”, 66.} In any case, the fact that in Kajr3.8 שָׁמְרוֹן appears here to be a toponym lends further weight to the suggestion that שָׁמְרוֹן in Kajr3.1 may also be read as a toponym.

Finally, on Pithos A, the letter yôt is repeated three times in a vertical line (Kajr3.5) adjacent to a drawing of a suckling calf. These are written upside-down from the perspective of the vessel stood on its base.\footnote{Note that whereas the drawings are consistently oriented according to the perspective of the vessel standing on its base, a number of inscriptions on Pithos A are written at different angles, suggesting that the vessel was laid on its side (in various positions) when it was inscribed, indicating that many of the inscriptions were completed once it had been emptied. This reinforces the impression that the Pithoi were simply used as a convenient writing surface, rather than being used for depositing offerings in the bench-room.} The execution of the letters is inconsistent and the scribe has omitted the arm from the middle yôt. In addition, approximately 10 yôds of varying shapes and dimensions (Kajr3.15) are written immediately above one of the handles on pithos B. Finally, a number of unidentifiable marks occupy the space below the “Bes” figures on pithos A. It is difficult to find any other explanation for these letters and markings than the scribbling of an idle hand, strokes to remove excess ink from the nib, or a student learning to handle a pen.

2.5. DISCUSSION

It is possible that the lithic and ceramic inscriptions were dedicatory graffiti offered as a safeguard for the named parties, but the evidence is not compelling. Each of the pithoi inscriptions (including the epistolary formulae and drawings) may plausibly be explained as \textit{ad hoc} documents including lists, drafts, and practice exercises. Cumulatively, they suggest that the pithoi were simply viewed as a convenient writing surface. This is further supported by the inscribed Pithos C (Kajr3.16, 3.17), which was
located together with ordinary store-jars in the southern storeroom (see fig.2.1), suggesting that there was nothing inherent in the written word that gave the vessel a religious (or numinous) significance.\textsuperscript{147} Recently, Brian Schmidt has argued that the drawings and inscriptions may have served as scribal-artisan drafts for pieces that were subsequently transferred onto the walls, and that they secondarily took on a numinous (apotropaic) function. This may be so, but the case for secondary sanctification of the vessels goes beyond the available evidence, and does not account for the full diversity of the written material.\textsuperscript{148} This leaves only the stone vessels (\textit{Kajr}1.1–1.4) for which a dedicatory function seems likely.

If it is permissible to view the epistolary formulae as evidence of a general practice of written correspondence, then we may suppose that one or more literate individual(s) were stationed at the site on a (semi)permanent basis. This is consistent with the extraordinary volume of written material, and the inference that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was an officially sanctioned settlement that was provisioned from outside (see further §4.7). In general, the impression is that writing featured at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud as a more or less quotidian activity.

\textsuperscript{147} There is no indication that the inscriptions on Pithos C should be treated differently to those on Pithoi A and B. It is true that no DNN are preserved in the extant fragments, which might be significant if it is assumed that the presence of DNN gave Pithoi A and B numinous power; cf. Schmidt, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud’s Pithoi Inscriptions and Drawings”. But this is an argument from silence, and, as such, is not decisive. On the other hand, the inclusion of PNN in \textit{Kajr}3.16 (cf. Appendix A) suggests that the dangers inherent in writing PNN were not sufficient to warrant the special treatment of Pithos C; cf. the discussion of the written name in Schniedewind, \textit{How The Bible Became a Book}, 29–32.

\textsuperscript{148} Cf. Schmidt, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud’s Pithoi Inscriptions and Drawings”. See, for example, the repetitive and seemingly careless clusters of letters (e.g. \textit{Kajr}3.5 and 15) and the overlapping of the abecedaries and \textit{Kajr}3.6 with \textit{Kajr}3.8. That is not to deny that the writing could have had a numinous association in some (or even all) instances, but simply to state that the evidence does extend that far.
2.6. The Plaster Texts

2.6.1. Kajr4.1

Written in black ink on a thin layer of white plaster, Kajr4.1 was discovered on a bench in the northern wing of the bench-room (fig. 2.1). Although the plaster is extremely fragmentary, it was possible to restore two lines of text spanning five relatively large fragments. The fragments apparently belong to a single text; however, they are not perfectly aligned and it is uncertain precisely how much has been lost in the intervening spaces—the internal coherence of the lines suggests it was not much. While there are no visible traces of letters above the first line, insufficient space remains for us to be certain whether anything might have come before. On the other hand, the space preserved below the second line suggests that the surviving portion comes from the end of the inscription, or at least the end of a section. In addition, a number of disconnected small fragments were found in the same locus. These smaller fragments contain only a couple of letters each and appear to belong to the same inscription, indicating that Kajr4.1 was originally somewhat longer.

1. ]length of days and they were satisfied […] they gave to [Y]ahweh [of the] Teman and to [his] Asherah
2. ]YHWH of the Te[man…] has bettered […] has placed \[yn[…]hh[…] YH\[H…

149 Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 108–09.
Meshel initially restored רבך as the first word of the line; however, the traces of the first letter are ill-suited to בêt, and, although uncertain, ’ālep is the preferable reading.  

The restoration רבך has generated a number of differing interpretations. Dobbs-Allsopp, et al. understood רבך to be a construct chain (cf. biblical אֹרֶךְ יָּמִים, “length of days”, Ps 21:4 [Heb. 21:5]; 91:16; Prov 3:16; etc.). Alternatively, Mehsel restored a verbal clause, interpreting רבך as either the hip’il 3.m.p. impf.; i.e. יָאֲרִיכוּ יָּמִים “they will live long,” lit. “prolong days”, or the corresponding hip’il jussive יַאֲרִיךְ יֹמָּם “may they live long”; However, this reading must be considered extremely improbable due to the plene spelling of the 3.m.s. יַשְׁבֵּעָן and וַיִּשְׁבָּה in the same line. Then again, Aḥituv has suggested the hip’il 3.m.s. jussive יַאֲרִיךְ יֹמָּם “may he lengthen their days”. But Dobbs-Allsopp, et al. have countered that in biblical Hebrew the hip’il of רבך never appears with the singular noun ים (cf. Deut 11:9; Josh

150 Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 108–09. In this, he was followed by Renz, Die Althebräischen Inschriften, 58; Gogel, A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew, 413; Meshel, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud”, ABD 4:107; Aḥituv, Echoes from the Past, 322; Dobbs-Allsopp, et al., Hebrew Inscriptions, 286; Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 105–06. Recently Na’aman has argued in favour of רבך, adducing the ’ālep in וְאָשְׁרָה as evidence against the restoration of ’ālep as the first letter of line 1; cf. Na’aman, “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ‘Arud”, 308. In response to this I can only observe that the בêt in line 1 and 2 afford an even less convincing parallel than the ’ālep.


153 Aḥituv, Echoes from the Past, 322; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 105, 107. Note, however, that Aḥituv translated this as the plural “days”, which one would expect to be written יָמִם rather than יָּמִים; cf. the unreduced ʾêy diphthong in (line 2, see below). Note that Garr translates ים as a singular noun; cf. W. Randall Garr, Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 57.
24:13; Judg 2:7). Be that as it may, Aḥituv’s reconstruction is supported by the 3.f.s. jussive הַארְך֯ים, in line 4 of the Ekron dedicatory inscription. As such, in order to agree with the following 3.m.p. verbs, it seems preferable to follow Aḥituv and interpret the mem of יָמִם as the 3.m.p. pronominal suffix, rather than the masculine plural. However, there is no evidence to support the decision to translate אֲרֹך֯ as jussive (see below), and the 3.m.s. indicative, “he has lengthened”, fits contextually.

These verbs have consistently been interpreted as having a volitive (jussive) sense; however, there is no a priori reason to prefer the jussive over the indicative. Indeed, the use of the perfect indicative in line 2 rather supports the translation of the verbs in line 1 as indicative; although, since the end of the first line is incomplete, it is difficult to establish the precise relationship between the two lines.

If translated as an indicative, then the conjunction might be understood as the pa‘al-consecutive (cf. §3.1.1).

For the use of נָתַן in the context of offering something to a deity, compare Exod 22:29–30 and 1 Sam 1:11 where the verb refers to the consecration of the firstborn to God.

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155 Note that while there is some damage to the stone surface of the Ekron inscription at this point, the reading is reasonably well assured; see Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh, “A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron”, 1–16.


—The presence of the definite article in line 2 suggests that the article should be restored before יתימ in line 1 (on the significance of the article see §2.4.2).

—Hip’il 3ms, יטב, “to make good, to make glad”.¹⁵⁸ Note the unreduced diphthong (ay), which has been interpreted as an indication of Judaean (rather than Israelite or Phoenician) orthography (§3.2.3).¹⁵⁹

Note the alliteration of היטב and היצב, which has the quality of a refrain. This might suggest that Kajr4.1 had a liturgical or ritual function (see below).

—Ahituv, et al. read this as היצב. But, if the letter following the yōd is a têt, it is deformed (cf. the preceding têt, which is reasonably assured). Consequently, Na’aman proposed the restoration היצב, a 3.m.s. hip’il from יצָב, “to set, (cause to) stand firm”.¹⁶¹ However, in that case, it is necessary to interpret the yōd as a mater lectionis (m.l.). This is possible, but it is far from certain that internal m.l. were employed in the orthography at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (cf. §3.2.1). Consequently, it is preferable to interpret היצב as a 3.m.s. hip’il of the cognate I-yōd verb יצָב*, “to set, (cause to) stand” (though in BH יצָב is only attested in hitpaʿel, e.g. Josh 1:5; 1 Sam 3:10; 1 Sam 10:19). In this case, the yōd should be understood to represent the diphthong ay as in יטב. Note that in Aramaic the cognate

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¹⁵⁸ Cf. Ze’ev Meshel, “Did Yahweh Have a Consort? The New Religious Inscriptions from the Sinai” BAR 5/2 (1979): 28. Meshel translated this “Yahweh favoured”. Cf. Hoftijzer and Jongeling, “ṭb” Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions 1:454, n.72, identified this root as Phoenician; however, as Mastin noted, this is the only example from Phoenician which they offer, and they concede that the word may be Hebrew; Mastin, “The Inscriptions Written on Plaster at Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 108).

¹⁵⁹ Ahituv, Echoes from the Past, 324; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman), 107, 122–27.


D-stem participle, יָצֶב, “to be valid”, has a qualitative meaning (*TADAЕ* B3.10 R.22).

Aḥituv restored the following word as יָמָם (presumably influenced by his reading of יָמָם in the preceding line). However, this can hardly be correct, as the visible traces of the second letter of this word do not correspond to any of the other examples of mem in *Kajr*4.1 the letter in question is more likely to be nun (cf. יָמָן, nûn, and יָמָם in line 1).

Early publications identified *Kajr*4.1 it as a prayer or blessing, and this interpretation has had a lasting influence on discussions of the text ever since. This tendency was no doubt influenced to some degree by the apparently high number of blessing formulae found at the site, and has, in turn, influenced other interpretational choices, such as the translation of the imperfect verbs in the first line as jussive rather than indicative. However, once this bias is recognised and made explicit, the way is laid open for *Kajr*4.1 to be reconsidered. In fact, the use of perfects in the second line, and (correspondingly) the wāw consecutives in the first, gives the inscription a retrospective quality, which casts considerable doubt over the view that *Kajr*4.1 should be classified as a prayer or blessing. Rather, the first line apparently refers to something being offered or consecrated (נתן) to YHWH of the Teman and to his אַשְׁרֵה, while line 2 seems to describe the YHWH’s benevolence. Could this text preserve part of an offering ritual? If so, it should be observed that the perfect aspect imbues the text with a retrospective rather than a prescriptive quality. Another possibility is that *Kajr*4.2, like *Kajr*3.9, might be a transcript from a song, in which YHWH is praised for his benevolence (e.g. Ps 98:1). In either

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162 Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 322.

case, there is a possibility that the text could be related to activities conducted in the immediate vicinity (see further Chapter 4).

2.6.2. Kajr4.2

This is the longest of the surviving plaster inscriptions. It was located on the floor of the bench room near the entrance to the courtyard.

1. ] when the earth quakes and when God shines in the high places […]
2. ]r and mountains will melt and hills will be crushed[…]
3. ] earth. The holy one over the gods […]
4. ] prepare [to] bless Ba’al on the day of battle[…]
5. ] to the name of God on the day of battle…

—A temporal clause: ב preposition + inf. meaning “when”. The imagery of the earthquake is a commonplace in descriptions of
theophany (e.g. Exod 19:18; Judg 5:5; Ps 29; 114:7–8; Ezek 3:12, 13; 38:19; Hab 3:6; cf. 1 Kgs 19:11–12; Isa 29:6).

For similar occurrences of this verb (העשתה, “to go forth”; figuratively: “shine”) in the context of theophany see Deut 33:2; Isa 60:1.

—Ahituv et al. identified דָּבָר הַבַּיִת with heaven; i.e. the dwelling place of the deity. However, in Habakkuk 3:10 the collective noun רֹם (rôm) apparently refers to “(mountain) heights” as part of a three tiered merismus signifying the whole of creation. Moreover, the disruption of nature at the passing of the divine presence is a common motif of the southern theophany tradition to which Kajr 4.2 seems to belong (see §2.8.2). As such, it is better to see רֹם as a synonymous parallelism corresponding to הַרָּאם “the mountains”, in the following line (cf. Mic 1:3).

For similar descriptions of the mountains melting (מססן) in the context of theophany see Ps 97:5; Mic 1:4.

—As Ahituv argued, the use of paragogic nun on these 3.m.p. verbs indicates future tense, rather than preterit or jussive. Accordingly, the wāw should be translated as simple conjunctive rather than wāw consecutive.

—Meshel, Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 111.
—Ahituv, Echoes from the Past, 325. The so-called nun paragogicum is typically found on the imperfect indicative, rather than the jussive or wāw consecutive. However, this is not always the case. In the Hebrew Bible paragogic nūns are found after wāw consecutive eight times: Deut 1:22; 4:11 [x2]; 5:19; Judg 8:1; Isa 41:5; Ezek 44:8; Amos 6:3, and only rarely on jussive verbs e.g. Job 31:10; Isa 26:11 (Joüon §44e); cf. Stephen A. Kaufman, “Paragogic nun in Biblical Hebrew: Hypercorrection as a Clue to a Lost Scribal Practice,” in Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor...
Several readings are possible for וידכ ן (√ת וידכ/וידכ) “to crush”). Ahituv et al. preferred either hitpa’el (וּיְיִדַּקְקִן; cf. Ps 51:10–Heb.8), or nif’al (cf. Ps. 51:19–Heb.17),\(^{167}\) while Dobbs-Allsopp, et al. preferred pu’al.\(^{168}\) Alternatively, McCarter has suggested וירך (ירך/ירך) “grew weak”.\(^{169}\)

The adjective גבננים (“jagged, rugged”; cf. גבג, “hunchbacked”, Lev 21:20) is attested in Ps 68:15–16 [Heb. 16–17], where it describes the mountain(s) of Bashan;\(^{170}\) however, as Ahituv et al. noted, if this reading is correct, one must assume that Kajr4.2 reflects an orthographic convention whereby a single consonant is used rather than repeating an identical consonant (in this case נûn), even when those two consonants have different phonemic values; cf. ברכ (= ברכך) in Kajr3.6 (see above).\(^{171}\) Yet, the possibility remains that both גבננים and ברכה are in fact instances of haplography, and, indeed, there are a number of other instances at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (albeit from incomplete or uncertain readings) in which identical juxtaposed letters are repeated (e.g. גג Kajr4.1; גג Kajr4.6.1; ונד Kajr4.6.6, and ונד Kajr4.6.8).\(^{172}\)

Be that as it may, a far superior interpretation on palaeographic grounds is McCarter’s פבנם, cf. Hurrian pabn- “mountain”. As McCarter noted,

\(^{167}\) Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 111.

\(^{168}\) Dobbs-Allsopp, et al., Hebrew Inscriptions, 288.


\(^{171}\) Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 111–12.

\(^{172}\) Of course we cannot be certain of the phonological environment of those combinations (cf. שמס, Kajr4.6).
the alternative קְרַשׁ fails on epigraphic (sic.) grounds: The first letter is a perfect פֵּה but unparalleled as gimel.”\(^{173}\)

Accordingly, they suggested that the first שׁ is a scribal error and amended the reading to קְרַשׁ, which they interpret as a divine epithet, "holy one".\(^{174}\)

For the use of קְרַשׁ as a substantive see Num 16:7; Deut 33:2; Job 6:10; Ps 71:22; KAI 4:4–5.

The noun אלהים, the shorter plural form of El, “God/Gods” (as opposed to the more common אלהים, only occurs four times in the MT: twice in the expression בני אלהים “sons of gods” (Ps. 29:1; 89:6 [Heb. 7]);\(^{175}\) once in the expression מִי־כָּלֵב אלהים “who is like you among the gods?” (Exod 15:11; note the defective spelling); and once in the expression אלהים god of gods” (Dan 11:36); cf. בני טְלֵינִים (Ps 82:6); בני העלם (Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7); and in the LXX is rendered ἄγγελον θεοῦ (and in several manuscripts: ὅπων θεόν).\(^{176}\)

Although no precise parallel is known for the expression קְרַשׁ אלהים, “holy one over the gods”, it is interesting to compare the common

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\(^{174}\) Meshel, Kuntillet ‘ Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 112, 135 n.5 and n.6; cf. Ahituv, Echoes from the Past, 326.

\(^{175}\) Note the possibility that בני אלהים in Ps. 29:1 and 89:6 reflects original בני אל (i.e. DN “El”, singular + enclitic mem); cf. Horace D. Hummel, “Enclitic mem in Early Northwest Semitic, Especially Hebrew,” JBL 76 (1957), 85–107, esp. 91 and 101–02; Simon B. Parker, “Sons of (the) God(s) בני טְלֵינִים ( אלהים),” DDD: 794; Karel van der Toorn, “God (1) אלהים”, ibid, 353.

Ugaritic divine epithet: *bn qdš*, “sons of the Holy One” (or, “sons of holiness”; KTU 1.2 I), evoking a hierarchy in the divine council.\(^{177}\)

Recently, Naʾaman has proposed the restoration דשדש עליא אבך “he treaded (sic.) on earth over (the) stones”, interpreting דשדש as a *pilpēl* form of the verb דוש, “to tread, trample”.\(^{178}\) This suggestion is possible; although the stance and proportions of the first grapheme seem to be better suited to קֶפ than דālet.\(^{179}\)

The noun בּלוּא might reasonably be understood either as a DN, or an epithet (i.e. “the lord”), in synonymous parallelism with El in the following line.\(^{180}\) However, there is no clear evidence that בּלוּא was ever used as an Epithet of El in the Hebrew tradition.\(^{181}\) The lone reference to the divine appellation בעלְי, “my lord/Baal” (Hos 2:16) is of uncertain value.\(^{182}\) It is therefore more likely that בּלוּא in *Kajr*4.2 represents the deity Baal. In any case, owing to the

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\(^{178}\) Naʾaman, “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 309.

\(^{179}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman)*, 112–13, figs. 5.54, 5.55a and 5.55b.

\(^{180}\) See the detailed discussion in Mastin, “The Inscriptions Written on Plaster at Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 110–13; cf. Meshel, *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman)*, 133.


\(^{182}\) Herrmann, “Baal בּלוּא”, *DDD*: 136 argued that in this context בעלְי should be understood as the common noun “husband”. Perhaps more significant are the allusions to בעלְי ברית and עליא ברית in Judges 9:4 and 9:46 (respectively). However, as Day has suggested, in this instance the agrarian imagery makes it more likely that Baal is a proper noun and El a divine appellation; cf. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 69–70.
expression קדש עלי אלה in the preceding line, it is not surprising to find multiple DNN at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.

The allusion to blessing the deity is unusual, but parallels are known from the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Deut 8:10; Ps 26:12; Ps 134:2; cf. Judg 5:2, 9).

For the expression [כִּבֵּים מלחמה “day of battle,” see Job 38:23; Ps 78:9; Prov 21:31; Hos 10:14; Amos 1:14; and Zech 14:3. Prov 21:31 and Zech 14:3, in particular, associate the day of battle with the divine warrior.

*Kajr4.2* is a portion from a theophany, sharing notable similarities in vocabulary and compositional structure with theophanic hymns in the Hebrew Bible (these will be discussed in greater detail in §2.8ff.). The text is incomplete and its original length is unknown; however, the surviving lines appear to be composed in parallel cola, and, while we cannot know the place of this section in relation to the whole, the internal coherence of the fragment (esp. lines 4–5) suggests that the lines themselves were probably not much longer.

From a literary-traditional point of view, it is significant that the closest biblical parallels for the theophany in *Kajr4.2* associate the deity with the South (e.g. אֱלֹהִים מְתִימִן יִבָּא, “Eloah comes from Teman”, Hab 3:3). This southern association, together with the references to YHWH of (the) Teman in *Kajr3.6, 3.9, and 4.1*, suggests that the physical location of Kuntillet ʿAjrud was an important influence on text choice. We will return to this in Chapter 4.

In addition to the large fragment, there was a small fragment preserving portions of two lines (amounting to only five letters) written in

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184 Meshel, *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman)*, 110. Note that Meshel apparently preferred to view the lines as coming from the beginning (or near the beginning) of a composition; cf. ibid, 110.
the same hand. The editors placed the small fragment to the left of the main inscription so the second line was aligned with the first line of the large fragment, but there is no physical evidence to support this placement. The first line of the small fragment bears the word שָׁנָה. Aḥituv et al. suggested that שָׁנָה may be vocalised šēnîṯ, “second time,” or šēnāt/šēnōt, “year/years”. As discussed by the editors, šēnîṯ might have introduced a second or repeated theophany (cf. Gen 22:15; 41:5; Jer 1:13; 31:1); although this is unparalleled in the comparable biblical theophanies (see §2.8.2). Alternatively, šēnāt/šēnōt may have been intended to situate the theophany temporally or sequentially (cf. Deut 32:7; Joel 2:2 שָׁנָה דוֹרֶים, “years of ages past”). A third possibility, apparently not considered by Aḥituv et al., is that שָׁנָה be vocalised šēnat, the construct of šēnāh, “sleep” (cf. the expression שָׁנָה–שָׁלֻּמֶת, “sleep of ages”, viz. “death”; Jer 51:39, 57; cf. אישָׁן–הָמוֹת “sleep of death”, Ps 13:3 [Heb.4], in the context of divine speech in a prophecy against Babylon).

The second line bears the letters wāw and (probable) hê, which Aḥituv et al. related to the tetragrammaton. If correct, this would amount to a third possible DN, but it cannot be confirmed.

2.6.3. Kajr4.3

Kajr4.3 was the only plaster inscription found in situ. It was written in black ink on the north-western doorjamb of the bench room (fig.2.1), approximately 1.2m above floor level.
Epigraphic Analysis of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Inscriptions

1. [...] 1
2. [...] חַלֹּךְ[...]. 2
3. [...] וַתַּחֲנוּ[...]. 3
4. [...] יֵשֵׁב[...]. 4
5. [...] שָׁמֻשׂ[...]. 5
6. [...] אָסְקָר[...]. 6
7. [...] בֹּתֶר[...]. 7

1. [...] he/they walked [...]
2. [...] to the hand of the [...]
3. [...] the oppressive [...]. I will ascend to green [...]
4. [...] [...]
5. [...] to him. And he will [...]
6. [...] Cain destroyed a field and lofty mountains...

Alihituv et al. read the he with the following word: הַט, although they left the line untranslated. The verb יָנָה, “to oppress”, occurs x19 in the Hebrew Bible. In Pentateuchal law יָנָה is often used to describe the oppression of the poor or the alien: e.g. Exod 22:21 [Heb.20]; Lev
The syntax of this line may be compared to instances in which the attributive *qal* participle qualifies a preceding noun: "oppressive anger" (Jer 25:38), "the oppressing sword" (Jer 46:16; 50:16), "the oppressing city" (Zeph 3:1).

—Ahituv et al. declined to translate this line. Na’aman proposed the restoration אشكل . אשלין יNeill , "a poor and oppressed son of a need, a poor person…". However, the *’ayin* of *עסק* seems unlikely on the basis of the published photographs. The *sâmek* and *qôp* are quite clear, but the straight edge of the preceding grapheme is better suited to *ʾalep*. The remainder of the line admits several interpretations. The hapax verb אסק, 1.c.s. imperfect of √*נסק* "to ascend", is attested in Ps 139:8 (אמ־אסקך שםך אתה "if I ascend to the heavens, there you are").

The noun דשא , "green grass, vegetation" is widely attested in the Hebrew Bible, while in the stative verb דשא is attested once in Joel 2:22: דשאוֹנאותֲנָהּ נַבְרָה "the pastures of the wilderness are green".

—This is the reading cautiously proposed by Ahituv et al.; cf. Na’aman’s translation "spear". קין may be identified with the Kenites (cf. Num 24:21–22), who are often associated with mountain heights in the Hebrew Bible (Num 24:21; Jer 49:16; Hab 2:9; however, cf. Josh 5:57, where קין is listed among towns in the Judean hills). Given the references to YHWH of (the) Teman *Kajr* 3.6, 3.9, 4.1 and the southern theophany in *Kajr* 4.2, it is interesting to note that in the Hebrew Bible the Kenites are particularly associated with the region of Edom, reinforcing the impression that the physical location of

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185 See Paul R. Gilchrist, “יָּנָּה” in *TWOT*: 874.
Kuntillet ʿAjrud had a direct bearing on the texts inscribed on the walls (see *Kajr*4.2). Following Ahituv et al., **שחת** may be identified with the Hebrew root **שחת**, “to destroy, lay waste”.

—Other interpretations of [*...*] **מרם** include **מרם** “heights” (cf. **מרם** “open heights” Judg 5:18), and **מרם** “treachery” (cf. Ps 55:24).

The text is in very poor condition, making its interpretation extremely difficult. Nevertheless, Naʿaman has recently suggested that *Kajr*4.3 might contain an early version of the Exodus story, in which the birth of a hero (Moses) is followed by the crossing of the sea. In broad terms, Naʿaman may be correct in his conjecture that *Kajr*4.3 was drawn from an ancient Israelite folk-tale; however, my interpretation differs from his in several particulars. The restoration offered above seems to describe the protagonist(s) rising from affliction (line 4). Meanwhile, the possible references to green pastures (line 4) and to Cain/Kenites (line 7)—who are associated in the Hebrew Bible with the region of Edom—might suggest that the extant fragment comes from a wilderness itinerary (note also the verbs of motion: **הלך**, line 2; **אסק**, line 4). Significantly, as with the theophany in *Kajr*4.2 and the references to YHWH of (the) Teman in *Kajr*3.1, 3.9 and 4.1, the probable allusion to Edom gives the text a local frame of reference.

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2.6.4. *Kajr*4.4

This inscription consists of two larger fragments and a number of smaller fragments that preserve only one or two letters. The text is written in red ink and was located at the western end of the courtyard (fig. 2.1). The script of *Kajr*4.4.2 appears to differ from that of *Kajr*4.4.1 and may have been written by a different hand.\(^{191}\) *Kajr*4.4.1 is the only fragment from which it is possible to reconstruct a partial phrase.

\[\text{[1]}
\text{וישמע ועָשַּׁת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלֶּה בְּקֹל.}
\]

\[\text{[2]}
\text{הָיִם בְּגִלְגַּל.}
\]

\[\text{[3]}
\text{וְיָשָׁנָהוּ אֶלֶּה בְּגִלְגַּל.}
\]

1. \[\text{[1]}
2. And \[\text{[2]}
3. \[\text{[3]}

In the Hebrew Bible \(בְּקֹל\) most often occurs in the construct as the object of a verb; e.g. יָשָׁתֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל \(וְיָשָׁנָהוּ אֶלֶּה בְּגִלְגַּל\) in the construct as the object of a verb; e.g. יָשָׁתֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל \(וְיָשָׁנָהוּ אֶלֶּה בְּגִלְגַּל\) to the voice of Israel”, Num 21:3 (cf. Num 21:3; Deut 8:20; 13:18; 15:5; Josh 5:6; 10:14; Judg 13:9; Isa 50:10; Jer 3:25; etc.). However, Aḥituv et al., presumably influenced by the old Canaanite theophany tradition (cf. KTU 1.4 vii, lines 25–37; see §2.8.1), restored the verb יָשָׁתֶה, “to

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\(^{191}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman)*, 117.
“thunder” and understood בָּכֵל, as the voice of Baal: בָּכֵל [וֹרֵעָם ] “Baal thundered in voice/[his voice]” (cf. 1 Sam 7:10: יהוה בָּכֵל־בָּכֵל [וֹרֵעָם ] “and the LORD thundered in a great voice”).

Alternatively, it is also possible to read Baal as the object of a verbal clause, e.g. רָעָם בָּכֵל [וֹרֵעָם ] “and they answered Baal in a great voice” (cf. 1 Sam 28:12).

In this instance it seems likely that בָּכֵל should be interpreted as a DN, suggesting that בָּכֵל and אֵל in Kajr 4.2 should also be interpreted as DNN. This is also consistent with the possibility that אֵל should be interpreted as a DN, but it does not amount to proof.

2.6.5. Kajr 4.5

This inscription, written in red ink and located at the western end of the courtyard (fig. 2.1), is accompanied by a partially preserved line-drawing of an anthropomorphic head in profile. The outline of the drawing appears to have been lightly incised into the plaster before being retraced in the same red ink as the letters. Traces of two lines of writing are visible on the left-hand side of the head.

192 Meshel, Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 117.
—Traces of the fourth letter are visible on the broken edge of the plaster. These consist of a broad vertical stroke and possible traces of a horizontal line, suggesting an ‘ālep; in which case, the word might read הנבא “the prophet” (cf. Lachish 3 and 16). If this reading is correct, then it is interesting to speculate as to the relationship between the inscription and the anthropomorphic figure: could this be a representation of the prophet referred to in the text? Needless to say, due to the extremely poor condition of this small fragment, such conjectures cannot be verified.

2.6.6. Kajr4.6

Written in faded red ink, this inscription was found at the foot of the stairs at the western end of the courtyard (fig.2.1). A number of smaller fragments appear to belong to the same inscription, but it is difficult to supply any order to them.

1. [...] to a people names(?)
2. [...] he said, “If the…
3. [...] my word(s) but do not …!”

לעمش—The space between the probable lamed and ‘ayin is slightly larger than expected; however, there is a clear word divider following the mêm at the beginning of the line, indicating that lamed and ‘ayin should be read together. Erhard Blum proposed the alternative restoration לעשך,√עש, “to/for your load” (cf. the BH homophone עמש and the PN עמש;); although, his attempt to identify this with the possibility that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud functioned as a caravanserai is less convincing. 194 שֶם admits several alternatives. It might be translated “heavens”, with contraction of the diphthong (cf. BH שָּׁמַיִם). While this would be the only demonstrable instance of diphthong contraction in the KAPT (cf. §3.2.3), it should be noted that Kajr 4.6 stands apart from the other plaster inscriptions on palaeographical grounds (see §3.6). שֶם might, otherwise, be related to the noun שֵם, “name”, with the 3.m.p. pronominal suffix: i.e. שֶםָּם, “their name”; or, as noted by Ahituv et al., it might be derived from the verb שָ֯מֵם, “to be astonished”. 195

אש—Ahituv et al. were hesitant to posit a reconstruction for these letters; however, the traces of ‘ālep and mêm are reasonably clear. An alternative is to read šîn rather than mêm, and restore the common noun אָש, “man”. Blum’s proposed אך is not convincing. 196 For the pairing of the conditional particle with the nota accusativi, compare: אָשָׁ֯ת אֲחֵדְבָּךְ, והז sonra, “if you do this thing” (Exod 18:23); בְּאָשָׁ֯ת אֲחֵדְבָּךְ, והז sonra, “and you shall do this thing” (Exod 18:23).

194 Erhard Blum, “Die Wandinschriften 4.2 und 4.6 sowie die Pithos-Inschrift 3.9 aus Kuntillet ‘Aǧrud’”, ZDPV 129 (2013): 42. For the phonological equivalence of šîn and samek, cf. the discussion of the PN אשא, corresponding to the biblical PN אשא; see Appendix A (§27).
195 Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 120.
196 Blum, “Die Wandinschriften 4.2 und 4.6 sowie die Pithos-Inschrift 3.9 aus Kuntillet ‘Aǧrud’”, 42.
“and if someone consecrates a bought field, which is not part of his possession, to YHWH” (Lev 27:22; cf. Num 11:22; Josh 24:15; 2 Kgs 17:36, 39). Alternatively, את may be parsed as the 2.m.s. independent pronoun, “if you” (e.g. Gen 23:13; 31:52; cf. pl. את), Num 14:30; Judg 6:31; on the defective orthography, see §3.2.1).

Alternatively—Aḥituv et al. read את ישאל, presumably “he said: ‘he/they will ask’”. 197 Alternatively, Blum has proposed the preferable את, “my word(s), and do not”, followed by an imperative. 198

While the lack of context hampers interpretation, it is interesting to note the repetition of the verb את (lines 2 and 3), suggesting that Kajr4.6 may have recounted some form of discourse. Recently, Blum has argued that Kajr4.6 was an open letter addressed to visitors passing through the site, which makes sense only if the writer assumed the addressee would stop in the foreseeable future or was aware of its presence. 199 Hence, he argued, the text was directly related to Kuntillet 'Ajrud’s function as a way-station. 200 Blum’s interpretation may be correct, but his bold restorations of this exceptionally fragmentary text are made to bear a very heavy burden. Ultimately, the best test of his hypothesis is the extent to which it can be reconciled with the other plaster inscriptions and the archaeology of the site (see Chapter 4). To this end, it should be noted that apart from Blum’s proposed reading of Kajr4.6, there is no indication that the KAPT address their audience directly. Furthermore, Kajr4.2 and 4.3 have a hymnic and mythopoeic quality, respectively, that might suggest they were adapted from traditional (oral) registers (cf. §2.8.3). On the other hand, as

197 Note that Aḥituv et al. offered no translation for Kajr4.6; Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 120.
198 Blum, “Die Wandinschriften 4.2 und 4.6 sowie die Pithos-Inschrift 3.9 aus Kuntillet 'Ağrūd”, 42.
199 Ibid, 43.
200 Ibid, 43.
was discussed above, Kajr4.1 might describe some sort of ritual, but even there the use of perfect verbs suggests that the focus is on past events. Of course, it is not necessary to presume that the KAPT represent a coherent and uniform corpus (note that Kajr4.6 was removed spatially from Kajr4.1–4.3; see further §4.9.1), but even so the uniqueness of Blum’s interpretation warrants caution. By this measure, the hypothesis may be deemed possible, but not probable.

2.7. DISCUSSION

The fragmentary nature of the KAPT (esp. Kajr4.4–4.6) permits only provisional comments regarding their nature and possible function. Be that as it may, Kajr4.2 and 4.3 (and perhaps 4.1) give the impression of being drawn from traditional tales and songs. What is particularly striking in each is the close association with the geographical location of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud: e.g. the epithet “YHWH of Teman” (Kajr4.1); the southern theophany tradition (Kajr4.2); and the (probable) allusion to Cain/Kenites (Kajr4.3).

In addition to the geographical association is the intriguing possibility that Kajr4.5 included an allusion to a prophet (נביא). Did the settlement at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud have a prophetic connection associated with the immanence of YHWH of Teman? We will return to this question in Chapter 4.

2.8. “WHEN GOD SHINES IN THE HEIGHTS”: Kajr4.2 AND THE MARCH OF THE DIVINE WARRIOR

Owing to its relatively good state of preservation and its prominent position near the entrance to the bench-room, it is inevitable that the theophany (Kajr4.2) should occupy a central place in discussions of the plaster inscriptions at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. To be sure, there is a danger that this text might be made to bear a disproportionate weight when appraising the literary character of the plaster corpus as a whole. However, as will be seen, Kajr4.2 can be read within a well-established form critical tradition
and offers potentially significant clues as to the function of the plaster texts in the context of the bench-room and the nature of the site at large.

2.8.1. Theophany in the Bible and in the Ancient Near East

In the last fifty years, biblical theophany has been the subject of a number of significant form critical studies. Each of these has attempted, with the characteristic emphases of their respective authors, to understand biblical theophanies against their Near Eastern background. And each has shed valuable light on various aspects of the forms and history of the theophany traditions. However, the diversity reflected in these studies and the variety of their conclusions testify to the enormous adaptability of the theophany genre throughout biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature.

In part, the diversity in the secondary literature is definitional, stemming from the fact that each study has applied different criteria to delimit the corpus of theophanic texts. Thus, for example, George Savran emphasized communicative and transformative aspects at the level of

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divine-human interaction in his concern with the narratival function of theophany accounts.\textsuperscript{202} While, Jörg Jeremias, in his comparison with Mesopotamian and Canaanite storm-god theophanies was especially concerned with the visual appearance of the deity and attendant phenomena.\textsuperscript{203} Meanwhile, Cross extended the latter scope even further to include the Canaanite cosmogonic mythic cycle in which all participants are either divine or semi-divine.\textsuperscript{204}

As with Cross and Jeremias, the following discussion assumes a broad definition of theophany, in which it is not only the human response to the divine manifestation that is understood to be significant but also that of nature. More specifically, what is in view is any appearance of the deity that provokes some sort of change or reaction, especially where this is borne out in the natural world. Indeed, this approach is necessarily determined by the highly descriptive language of Kajr4.2.

Broadly speaking, ancient Near Eastern theophanies can be identified with two basic genres:

\textsuperscript{202} As Savran himself said, “I am not speaking of techniques of divination, nor am I referring to the notion of prophecy; itself a hugely complex and uncommon means of divine–human communication. Rather, I am alluding to texts which speak of visitation, of actual meeting between human and divine”; Savran, \textit{Encountering the Divine}, 1.

\textsuperscript{203} Jeremias, \textit{Theophanie: die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung}, passim, but note especially the discussion on pages 1–2, and 66–67.

\textsuperscript{204} The classification Baal cycle as cosmogonic is disputed and it has been objected by some that the extant texts do not relate a creation event, for a survey of the most influential interpretations see Mark S. Smith, \textit{The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume 1: Introduction With Text Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2} (Leiden; E.J. Brill, 1994), 58–106; however it seems likely that the mythic conflict between Baal and Yamm is a reflex of the widely attested \textit{chaoskampf} motif, commonly throughout the ancient Near East; cf. David T. Tsumura’s recent study \textit{Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament} (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), esp. 41–42.
1) Covenantal theophanies:⁴⁰⁵ these have as their focus the relationship between the human and the divine. They may be either individual or communal and relate to a range of matters from divine election to the issuing of oracles. They tend to be initiated by the deity.⁴⁰⁶ The message communicated by the deity and the human response are at the fore, and, consequently, divine discourse is a major focus in theophanies of this type. The divine legitimisation of the future or newly-crowned monarch is a frequently recurring theme.⁴⁰⁷ Generally, texts belonging to

2⁰⁵ This label is adapted from Jeffrey Niehaus and is intended here to emphasize the relationship these texts assume to exits between the deity and the respondent; e.g. Niehaus, God at Sinai, 142: “[a]ll Yahweh theophanies do in fact take place in covenantal contexts. The salvation and judgement that occur when God appears also take place under an aegis of covenant.”

2⁰⁶ Cf. Kuntz, The Self Revelation of God, 32. Niehaus contended that, in contradistinction to biblical theophanies, other religious practices of the ancient Near East often involved strenuous efforts to evoke the desired deity; cf. Niehaus, God at Sinai, 20; however, even in such cases, the appearance (or non-appearance) of the deity is always left to the deity’s own volition. The oracular dream report in the annals of Ashurbanipal (cylinder B, col. V, lines 46–50) is a case in point:

Ishtar hears the sighs I emitted, and she said, “Fear not!” and comforted me in my heart: “Because of the raising of thy hands which thou hast raised, (because of) thy eyes, filled with tears, I have had mercy on thee.” During that very same night in which I approached her, a certain seer lay down and saw a dream-vision.


In response to Niehaus, it might also be noted that this same pattern of prayer and response is likewise present in a number of biblical theophanies, e.g. 2 Sam 22:7–20 (= Ps 18:6–19).

2⁰⁷ Niehaus cited a number of divine election texts from Mesopotamia; Niehaus, God at Sinai, 95–101), but the pattern was also well-established in Egypt. Examples include the nomination of Thutmose III, recorded on the walls of temple of Amon at Karnak (“The Divine Nomination of Thut-mose III,” translated by John A. Wilson (ANET, 446–47); and the dream oracle of Thutmose IV in which the future reign of the prince is announced and Thutmose is directed to restore the sphinx (“A Divine Oracle through a Dream,” translated by John A. Wilson (ANET, 449).
this first category culminate in a renewed or altered understanding of the relationship between the human recipient(s) and the divinity.

2) Divine warrior and storm-god theophanies: the manifestation of a deity in a storm may sometimes describe natural phenomena, envisaging the storm as the embodiment and expression of the deity’s power, but

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209 Schwemer took account of both the ubiquity and diversity of the storm-god motif when he observed:

“Storm and Tempest were felt to be a numinous power in all ancient Near Eastern societies; everywhere one of the great gods was thought to be the embodiment of and lord over the storms, tempests and associated phenomena. The relative significance and sphere of activities of the individual storm-gods was dependent, among other things, on the climactic conditions of the individual regions. Thus the storm-god as bringer of rain has no role in the agrarian rituals of Babylonia, where agriculture was characterised by irrigation, while his characteristic as lord of the destructive storm—including dust-storms— is prominent” (Schwemer, “The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East”, 130–31).
often the divine warrior and storm-god motifs are mixed. In theophanies of this type, the deity is usually depicted as wielding cosmic or meteorological weapons and often leads an entourage of personified natural and meteorological elements;\footnote{210} sometimes the deity is described as riding the flood or the storm.\footnote{211} These descriptions share a characteristic focus on the mighty deeds of the deity, whether past, present, or future.

Both of these basic types may be identified in the Hebrew Bible. The most common examples of the first type are the announcement and call narratives (e.g. Gen 28:10–19; Exod 3:1–22; Judg 13:2–18; and 1 Sam 3:10–13), but the relational emphasis of this type is also evident in the great communal theophanies: e.g. the Sinai theophany (Exod 19–31); the ordination of Aaron (Lev 9); and the dedication of the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kings 6–8; esp. 8:6–11). The second type is most evident in the Psalms and the Prophets (e.g. 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18); Ps 46; 74:12–17; 77:16–20; 97; Isa 29:6; Jer 10:16 (= 51:16), etc.), and frequently imagines God as a powerful judge coming to vindicate the righteous.\footnote{212}

*Kajr*4.2 belongs to a subgroup of the divine warrior theophany genre. The characteristic feature of this subgenre is its focus on the march of the divine warrior and the upheaval of nature that is caused by his passing. Biblical theophanies belonging to this subgroup include: Exod 19:9–20 (cf. Deut 5:4–5); Deut 33:2–3; Judges 5:4–5; 2 Sam 22:8–13 (= Ps 18: 7–12);

\footnote{210} An excellent survey of these themes is Weinfeld, “Divine Intervention in War in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East”, 121–47.


\footnote{212} For a study of this motif in the Psalms, including a discussion of divine warrior terminology, see Harold W. Ballard Jr., *The divine warrior motif in the Psalms* (BIBAL dissertation series 6; North Richland Hills, Tex.: BIBAL Press, 1999), 35–40.

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If Gerald Wainwright’s historical reconstruction is correct, then this same pattern also holds true of the Egyptian storm-gods. Gerald A. Wainwright, “The Origins of Storm-Gods in Egypt,” *JEA* 49 (1963): 13–20.

Owing to the continuity of both form and content, it is often felt that there is a linear (hereditary) relationship between biblical theophanies and other Canaanite and Near Eastern theophanies; although one must make allowance for inherent demands and possibilities afforded by the subject matter. Among the most persuasive analyses of this relationship, and possibly the most relevant for the study of Kajr4.2, is Cross’ *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*.

Based principally on his reading of the mythic Baal-Anat cycle from Ugarit and Psalm 29—which is commonly understood to be an ancient Baal hymn appropriated for use in the Yahweh cultus—Cross thought to discern two patterns or genres basic to the divine warrior-storm god theophany. The first pattern (1) describes the march of the divine warrior to battle. In this pattern the deity’s wrath is manifest in nature as heavens and earth are thrown into turmoil at his passing. In the foreground is the cosmogonic struggle with chaos. The second pattern (2) describes the return of the victorious warrior to be enthroned in his new temple on his newly-won mountain. In the background is the cosmogonic struggle with the Sea or flood-dragon; in the foreground is the deity’s manifestation as “victor” and “king” in the storm. Triumphant, the divine warrior sounds

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his voice in the storm-theophany and all nature is awakened. His coming brings renewed fertility and nature rejoices at the exultation of the deity.214

According to Cross, these same patterns and motifs are also present, in altered form, in the hymnic fragments of Yahwistic theophany preserved in the Hebrew Bible, and this led him to conclude that “the language of theophany in early Israel was primarily language drawn from the theophany of Baal.”215

Cross’ analysis of the Ugaritic evidence is compelling and there can be little doubt that at almost every level a common stock of language and motifs permeate both the Canaanite divine warrior/storm god theophany and the biblical theophanies. Otherwise, to quote Cross, “the Canaanite hymn, Psalm 29, would hardly have been accommodated to the cult”.216


215 Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 156–57, drawing on the fuller discussion in chs. 5 and 6; idem, From Epic to Canon, 24. Significantly, Cross understood these hymnic fragments to be among the oldest material in the Bible and, consequently, closer in time to the Canaanite prototype than their later reworking during the time of the monarchy; cf. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 86, 99–105, 157, 158, 163. Central to the tradition was the crossing of the Reed Sea; although, Cross did not believe that the earliest sources—which were principally concerned with the folk-memory of the Exodus-Conquest—equated the crossing with the divine warrior’s slaying of Yamm or the flood-dragon. Rather, this was a later mythologising development, cf. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 87, and esp. Ch. 6.

However, despite Cross’ expert and nuanced reading of the texts, there is in fact little evidence that his first pattern (1) is properly a part of the Ugaritic genre. That is, while the mythic texts vividly describe the preparations of the divine warrior, followed by the moment of battle and its aftermath, the march of the deity and the ensuing turmoil are not described. The focus is solely on the divine action and the passive response of nature, an essential feature of Kajr4.2 and the biblical theophanies to be discussed below, is omitted.

The climactic scene describing Baal’s combat with Yamm (KTU 1.2 IV, lines 1–35) is a perfect example. In this text, after an extended prologue describing the exchange of messengers, the narrative transitions directly from Baal’s first battle with Yamm (lines 1–7), to Kothar wa-Hasis’ fashioning of weapons for Baal (lines 7–23), then to Baal’s ultimate victory over Yamm (lines 23–35). But nowhere is Baal’s march to battle described.

Gordon D. Young; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 99–112. In his later essay “Traditional Narrative and the Reconstruction of Early Israelite Institutions”, in From Epic to Canon, 39, Cross added: “[t]hat the pattern existed before the elaboration of units in the Israelite Epic – and indeed shaped the selection of events to be narrated – can be argued on the basis of the myth of the Divine Warrior from Ugarit, as well as from Hebrew poetry early and late”. Cf., more extensively, Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 162–63). Indeed, Cross had already anticipated this equation in an earlier chapter of Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic when he said: “More eloquent testimony is to be found in the archaic hymns to be discussed in the next section. Thus Exodus 15:1–18 treats both Exodus and Conquest; Deuteronomy 33:1–3, 26–29; Judges 5:4–5 (=Psalms 68:8–9); and Habakkuk 3:3–7, all describe the Divine Warrior marching in conquest from the Southland. In these poems one finds the language of the theophany of the Divine Warrior utilizing mythical elements from the theophany of the stormgod as warrior”; Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 86.


218 This pattern seems to be repeated in the Hittite myths; e.g. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., Hitite Myths (2nd edition; SBLWAW 2; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1998), §2.16; §18a.67.

219 Admittedly, we cannot know what may have come in the damaged KTU 1.2, col. III.
Similarly, in Mot’s depiction of Baal’s conquest of the flood-dragon Litan\(^{220}\) (KTU 1.5 t, lines 1–4 = lines 27–31), the response described in the heavens is a reaction to the battle and the defeat of the primordial monster, rather than the march of the divine warrior:

\[
k \text{tmh} \cdot \text{lt} \cdot \text{bh} \cdot \text{brh} \quad \text{When you smote ln, the writhing serpent;}
\]

\[
t\text{kly} \cdot \text{bh} \cdot \text{qltn} \cdot [\text{[[s]]}] \quad \text{(When you) annihilated the crooked serpent,}
\]

\[
\text{slyt} \cdot \text{d} \cdot \text{sb} \cdot \text{rt} \cdot \text{ra} \text{sm} \quad \text{The tyrant with seven heads.}
\]

\[
\text{tkh} \cdot \text{trpr} \cdot \text{shm} \quad \text{The heavens wilted, they sagged.}\]

The scene in which Baal is commanded to descend to the underworld (KTU 1.5 v, lines 6–13) may be closer to Cross’ formulation. But even here the response of the natural world to the passing of the divine presence apparently falls outside the poet’s frame of reference. Instead, in imagery reminiscent of Habakkuk 3:5, the storm god Baal is described as surrounded by an entourage of personified meteorological elements:

\[
\text{wat} \cdot \text{qh} \quad \text{And you, take}
\]

\[
\text{r} \text{rptk} \cdot \text{rhk} \cdot \text{mdlk} \quad \text{your clouds, your winds, your lighting,}
\]

\[
\text{mrtrk} \cdot \text{mk} \cdot \text{sb} \cdot \text{t} \quad \text{your rain with you; your seven}
\]

\[
\text{glmk} \cdot \text{tnm} \cdot \text{hnzrk} \quad \text{youths, your eight attendants}^{222}
\]

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\(^{221}\) For a review of the secondary literature surrounding the difficult word *trpr* see Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 65, n. 114.

\(^{222}\) Cf. KTU 1.101 obv., lines 3–4:

\[
\text{sb} \cdot \text{t} \cdot \text{brqmn} [\text{[l]}] \quad \text{Seven lightnings…}
\]

\[
\text{tnm} \cdot \text{isr} \cdot \text{r} \cdot \text{t} \cdot \text{sb} \cdot \text{brq.} \quad \text{Eight storehouses of thunder. The shaft}
\]

\[
\text{y[x]}(x) \quad \text{of lightning…}
\]
On the other hand, the two great Baalistic theophanies, which do describe the response of nature, plainly belong to Cross’ second pattern. Thus, the storm-theophany (KTU 1.4 vii, lines 25–37) follows after the conquest of Yamm and describes the opening of a window in Baal’s newly won palace:

\[
\text{...ypth} \cdot \text{ḥ} \quad \text{...(Baal) opens a window}
\]
\[
\text{ln} \cdot \text{b bhtm} \cdot \text{urbt} \quad \text{in the house, an opening}
\]
\[
\text{b qr} \cdot \text{hklm} \cdot \text{ypth} \quad \text{within the palace.}
\]
\[
\text{b’l bdqt} \cdot \text{ḥpt} \quad \text{Baal opens a break in the clouds.}
\]
\[
\text{qlh} \cdot \text{qdš} \cdot \text{ḥpt} \quad \text{Baal gives forth his holy voice,}
\]
\[
\text{yt} \cdot \text{ḥp} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥpt} \quad \text{Baal repeats the issue of his lips.}
\]
\[
\text{qlh} \cdot \text{qdš} \cdot \text{ḥpt} \quad \text{His holy voice covers (?) the earth}
\]
\[
\text{ṣat} \cdot \text{ḥp} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥpt} \quad \text{(at) the issue of his lips the mountains}
\]
\[
\text{ḥṣn} \quad \text{tremble}
\]
\[
\text{rtq} \cdot \text{ḥrm} \cdot \text{ḥt} \quad \text{The ancient [mountains?] leap}
\]
\[
\text{qdym} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \quad \text{the high places of the earth}
\]
\[
\text{ṭṭ} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \quad \text{totter. The enemies of Baal take to}
\]
\[
\text{yrm} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \quad \text{the woods. The haters of Hadd, to}
\]
\[
\text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \cdot \text{ḥt} \quad \text{the mountain slopes}
\]

A similar pattern is found in Psalm 29 (e.g. vv.4–5); e.g.:

\[
\text{4The voice of YHWH breaks cedars;} \quad \text{קול יהוה שבר ארזים}
\]
\[
\text{YHWH shatters the cedars of Lebanon} \quad \text{ורבר יהוה את ארזי הלבנון}
\]
\[
\text{5He causes Lebanon to skip like a calf,} \quad \text{ורבר יהוה את ארזי הלבנון}
\]
\[
\text{And Sirion like a young aurochs} \quad \text{וחיר ממ ברימאמס}
\]

223 Following the restoration of Smith and Pitard, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, 650, 674–75.
224 Following ibid, 650, 675.
225 Following ibid, 650, 675–76.
There can be no doubt that Psalm 29, like KTU 1.4 vii, lines 25–37, describes the exultation of the triumphant deity. In the opening quatrain (vv.1–2) the refrain “ascribe” (הבו) is repeated three times, balanced in the fourth colon with “bow down” (השתחוו), while verse 10 reads: 226

Yhwh is enthroned over the flood; יהוה על המבול ישב
Yhwh is enthroned king forever. יהוה מלך עלולם

Significantly, in both of these texts the upheaval of nature is explicitly identified as a response to the issuing of the deity’s voice —apparently symbolising thunder, and so conceived as part of his meteorological arsenal—rather than a response to the divine presence itself.

When we look to the Mesopotamian theophanies the picture is somewhat different. A common Mesopotamian motif describes the intervention of the deity in battle wielding cosmic or meteorological weapons, as in the following excerpt from the epic of Tukulti-Ninurta: 227

Aššur in the vanguard went to the attack; the fire of defeat burned upon the enemy.
Enlil…in the midst of the foe … sends flaming arrows smoking.
Anu pressed the unpitying mace upon the wicked.
The heavenly light Sin imposed upon them the paralysing weapon of battle.
Adad, the hero, let a wind (and) flood pour down over their fighting.
Šamaš, lord of judgement, dimmed the eyes of the armies of the land of Sumer and Akkad.
Heroic Ninurta, first of the gods, smashed their weapons.

226 Note also that in the opening quatrain (vv.1–2) the refrain “ascribe” (הבו) is repeated three times, balanced in the fourth colon with “bow down” (השתחוו).
227 Translation by Peter Machinist, “The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I. A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1978), 118–21; apud Kang, Divine War in the Bible and in the Ancient Near East, 46.
And Ištar beat (with) her skipping rope, driving the warriors insane.

However, there is also a widely attested pattern in which the deity’s power is figuratively described as being actively manifest in (and against) nature. Thus, in the Old Babylonian hymn Angim, Ninurta is described as “the mace that destroys the mountains”.228 While, in a Sumerian hymn to Inanna, adapting imagery borrowed from the storm, we read:229

Like a dragon you have deposited venom on the land
When you roar at the earth like thunder, no vegetation can stand up to you.
A flood descending from its mountain,
Oh foremost one, you are the Inanna of heaven and earth!

Interestingly, in the Zinçirli Stele (rev. lines 12–14), this same pattern is adapted to the king, Esarhaddon; although there it is considered a sign of divine approval:230

228 Jerrold S. Cooper, The Return of Ninurta to Nippur: An-gim dim-ma (AnOr 52; Rome: Pontificium institutum biblicum, 1978), 88 – 89. From the context it is clear that the language here is metaphorical describing Ninurta’s power
230 Translation by Niehaus, God at Sinai, 135; following the text of Riekele Borger, Die Inschriften Asarhadons, Königs von Assyrien (AJO 9; Osnabruck: Biblio-Verlag, 1967), 97, §65, Rs. lines 12–14:

12. šarru šá tal-lak-ta-šú a-bu-bu-um-ma ep-še-ta-šú
13. [lab]-bu na-ad-ru pa-nu-uš-šú zu(?)-um-ma ar-ke-e-šú ti-ib(?) qit-ru-ub
14. ta-ša-zi-šú dan-nu nab-lu muš-taḥ-me-tu 4Gira la a-ni-ḫu

In the recent RINAP edition, Erle Leichty, The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC) (RINAP 4; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), §98, 184, translated these lines somewhat differently:
The king whose march is like a flood-storm, whose acts are like a raging lion; before him is a storm-demon, behind him is a cloud-burst; the onset of his battle is mighty; a consuming flame, an unquenchable fire.

A common motif underlying each of these texts, as in the Baalistic theophanies, is that of the deity actively wielding his/her might against nature in an awesome display of power.\textsuperscript{231} Insofar as this is the case, these theophanies are subtly but significantly distinct from \textit{Kajr}4.2. That is, where the Ugaritic and Mesopotamian theophanies describe the gods’ actions against nature, \textit{Kajr}4.2, like the biblical theophanies to be discussed below, seems to conceive of the upheaval of nature as a passive response to the deity’s mere presence. But that is not to say that the passive response of nature is not attested elsewhere in the ancient Near East.

In the Egyptian \textit{Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor}, lines 56–66, the narrator describes the earth-shaking approach of the deity as follows:\textsuperscript{232}

\begin{verbatim}
12. mu-ḥal-li-qa ga-reme-šū LU GAl-šà tal-
lak-ta-šū a-bu-bu-um ma e p-še-
ta-šū
13. lab-hu na-ad-ru pa-na-uš-šū URU-um-
ma ar-ke-e-šū ti-lu qit-ru-ub
ta-ḥa-zi-šū dan-nu nab-lu muš-taḥ-mi-
ṭu dGiŠ.BAR ta a-ni-hu

the king whose passage is the deluge and whose deeds are a raging lion – before he (comes) it is a city, when he leaves it is a tell. The assault of his fierce battle is a blazing flame, a restless fire.
\end{verbatim}

Regardless of the translation of the difficult line 13, the imagery in line 12 likening the king’s passage to a powerful flood is striking.

\textsuperscript{231} A similar pattern can also be identified in the mythic descriptions of the Hittite storm god, Telipinu, e.g. Hoffner, \textit{Hittite Myths}, 61 §38 (B iii 3–14).

\textsuperscript{232} The \textit{Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor} is known from a single Middle Kingdom papyrus copy, P Leningrad 1115, located in the Imperial Museum of St. Petersburg. For text and discussion, see Miriam Lichtheim, \textit{Ancient Egyptian Literature: a Book of Readings: The Old and Middle Kingdoms} (vol.1 of \textit{Ancient Egyptian Literature: a Book of Readings}; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1973-1980), 211.
Then I heard a thundering noise and thought, “It is a wave of the sea.” Trees splintered, the ground trembled. Uncovering my face, I found it was a snake that was coming. He was of thirty cubits; his beard was over two cubits long. His body was overlaid with gold; his eyebrows were of real lapis lazuli.  

While in this text the imagery may simply underscore the serpent-deity’s immense size, in the first stanza of the “cannibal spell” similar imagery is used to describe the approach of the deified king:

The sky is clouded, the stars disturbed,  
The “bows” quake, the bones of the earth god tremble.

In other texts, too, the appearance of the deity is heralded by quaking in the heavens and earth. As in the cuneiform examples above, Erik Hornung has suggested that the imagery is calculated to reflect the tremendous power believed to emanate from the deity, and this would seem to be confirmed when we compare waking theophanies with Egyptian dream theophanies. Generally, the literary accounts of dream theophanies make no mention of tumult accompanying the appearance of the deity. An explanation of this difference may lie in an ancient Egyptian belief about the nature of sleep and the dream-state, as identified by Adriaan de Buck. According to this view the sleeper enters into the world of the gods, the Jenseits, and, consequently, the action that unfolds in a dream occurs within the divine realm. But when the deity enters into the “visible world”, nature struggles to contain their presence; unless, that is,

233 Translation by Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol.1, 212.
the divine presence is mediated in some way, as in the person of the Pharaoh or a cultic object. This pattern is also reflected in the biblical dream theophanies (cf. Gen 28:10–19), and a similar belief may lie behind the biblical texts that associate the deity with a sacred place (e.g. Exod 3:5; cf. Exod 40:34–48; 1 Kgs 8:6–11), or a sacred object (e.g. 1 Sam 4:3, 7–8), since in those passages there is typically no mention of disruption in the natural world.

2.8.2. The Biblical Southern Theophany Motif

As we have seen, Cross’ conflation of theophany motifs led him to overstate the similarity of the patterns preserved in biblical and Ugaritic literature. At the same time, he assumed an artificial homogeneity in the inner-biblical theophanies. Even within the divine-warrior motif there is considerable diversity, and although the pattern of the deity actively wielding their power against nature is attested in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ps 29 above), it is in the southern theophany motif that we find the clearest examples of the tumult of nature as a passive response to the divine presence. This motif is characterised by a pattern in which the deity (identified as YHWH, Elohim or Eloah), in the role of the divine warrior, marches in power from the South. Four texts in particular reflect this motif: Deut 33:2–3; Jud 5:4–5; Ps 68:7–8 (Heb. 8–9); and Hab 3 (esp. vv. 3–4). In addition, similar language and imagery are found in Ps 97:1–


238 Interestingly, this same pattern is repeated in the DAPT, insofar as there the dream theophany is summarily described with no reference to attendant phenomena; although, this is, of course, an argument ex silentio.

239 Significantly, it is precisely these texts, along with the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–18), that Cross understood to mirror most closely the theophany of Baal; cf. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 157. Note also that some commentators see a reflection of the southern theophany pattern in Isa 63:1–6; e.g. Blenkinsopp, “The Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis Revisited”, 137. However, in these verses there is no mention of the response of nature which is a common thread that unites the other southern theophany texts. As
6 and Mic 1:3–4; although there the pattern is reconfigured so that the dwelling place of the deity is in Jerusalem. Significantly, the Sinai theophany in Exodus 19 is also expressed in remarkably similar terms, suggesting that it, too, draws on the same immanent tradition: e.g.  

Mount Sinai was entirely shrouded with smoke, because YHWH had descended on it in fire; smoke went up like the smoke from a kiln. And the whole mountain shook terribly” (Exod 19:18; cf. Deut 5:4–5).  

More precisely, Kajr4.2 is associated with the southern theophany motif through a shared repertoire of vocabulary and imagery:  

1) The deity is said to come from the mountainous regions to the south, identified variously as “Teman” (Hab 3:3); “Sinai” (Deut 33:2); “Seir” (Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4); “Paran” Deut 33:2; “Edom” (Judg 5:4); and possibly “the deserts of Kadesh” (Deut 33:2, see Appendix C). The southern location is not specified in Kajr4.2, but note the southern location of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and the repetition of the appellation “YHWH of (the) Teman” in Kajr3.6, 3.9, and 4.1.  

2) Following from the preceding point, the deity is associated with high places: סַעָד (Kajr4.2:1); מַסְנִים (Kajr4.2:3; Judg 5:5); מַסְנִים (Kajr4.2:2); מַסְנִים (Deut 33:2; Hab 3:3); cf. מַסְנִים (Mic 1:3); cf. מַסְנִים (Ps 68:15, 18 [Heb.16, 19]).  

3) The deity is associated with luminary imagery: צֶרֶת (Kajr4.2; Deut 3:2); cf. צֶרֶת (Judg 5:31); cf. Deut 33:2 and Hab 3:4, such, Isa 63 seems to reflect a later adaptation of the motif of God’s marching in judgement from the south.  

That is not necessarily to say that the Sinai theophany was the prototype of these later theophanies as is sometimes suggested; cf. Niehaus, God at Sinai.  

Admittedly, the four key Southern Theophany texts contain numerous textual problems. A full discussion is presented in Appendix C.  

which seem to describe a radiant aura (analogous to Akkadian *melammu*) surrounding the deity.\textsuperscript{243}

4) There is an emphasis on the disruption that accompanies the passage of the deity: e.g. יָרָשׁ (Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2:1}; Judg 5:4; Ps 68:8 [Heb.9]; cf. Hab 3:6); cf., רַגְּמָו (Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2:2}; Ps 97:4 [Heb.5]; cf., רַגְּמָו (Judg 4:4; Ps 68:8 [Heb.9]).

Inasmuch as they share a focus on the deity’s appearing in radiance in the South and on the passive response of nature, these theophanies (including Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2}) are set apart from other biblical and Near Eastern theophanies, and the pattern may be described as a characteristically Hebrew tradition.

2.8.3. **The Sitz im Leben of the Southern Theophany Tradition and Implications of Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2}**

The first thing that should be noticed with regard to *Sitz im Leben* is that each of the four main biblical iterations of the southern theophany motif (Deut 33:2–3; Jud 5:4–5; Ps 68:7–8 [Heb.8–9]; and Hab 3) occurs in the context of a song.\textsuperscript{244} This is important, because songs are inherently related to performance and, as such, they are by nature highly contextual. That is not to say that Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2} was itself necessarily intended to be performed—although it might have been—but it means that Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2} is unlikely to have been far removed from the life setting(s) of the southern theophany tradition as reflected in the Hebrew Bible. This must have shaped its reception. In this regard it matters little whether Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2} was a new composition or an adaptation of a pre-existing song (although there is no *a priori* reason to doubt the latter), or, for that matter, whether it was intended as a script to be sung aloud in oral performance, what matters are


\textsuperscript{244} Note the prosodic composition of Kajr\textsuperscript{4.2}, reflected in the use of *parallelismus membrorum*. 
the evocative and referential qualities associated with the motif. In other words, by participating in the conventions of the tradition, the contents of Kajr4.2 evoke (and invoke) the immanent performance situation(s) of the southern theophany motif. As such, its function within the space, and the function of the space generally, are likely to reflect (in some form) the situational context of the cognate songs. It follows that if we can determine the manner in which those songs would have been encountered, we can go some way toward appreciating the function and reception of Kajr4.2.

Unfortunately, comparison with the biblical evidence supplies only a partial picture. The two psalms, Ps 68 and Hab 3, have all the hallmarks of choral compositions—including a superscription and musical directions (Ps 68:1; Hab 3:1, 19), and the annotation selah (Ps 68:7 [Heb.8], 19 [Heb.20], 32 [Heb.33]; Hab 3, 9, 13)—and both may have had a liturgical function in a cultic setting. This might support the view that the

245 The interpretation of the (probable) DNN El and Baal in Kajr4.2 might have a bearing on the question of the text’s originality. Given the, otherwise overwhelming, prominence of YHWH of Teman at Kuntillet `Ajrud, the naming of other DNN in the theophany is somewhat surprising. Consequently, in view of the close relationship that the GN Teman establishes with the geographical context of the site, it could be inferred that Kajr4.2 was an older song that was selected primarily because of the geographical associations of the southern theophany tradition. If so, then it is reasonable to suppose that YHWH of Teman was the principle deity venerated at the site—as has already been argued on the basis of other evidence. In this case, the DNN in Kajr4.2 might be interpreted in two ways: (1) they might be taken as evidence for the syncretism of Yawhistic and Elohistic cults (even at this comparatively early stage), and interpreted as an indication that YHWH/El (and perhaps the wider pantheon collectively) inhabited the southern regions (note the prominence of Elohistic appellations in the southern theophany tradition, e.g. Hab 3:3); or (2) as discussed above, both אל and באל might be interpreted as common nouns and epithets of YHWH. On balance, the appearance of the (probable) DN Baal in Kajr4.4 lends weight to the former alternative.

246 Cf. J. H. Eaton, “The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3”, ZAW 76 (1964): 158–70. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that at some stage the Psalm of Habakkuk 3 might have existed independently of the rest of the book. In the Codex Alexandrinus it is reproduced in a slightly modified form in the book of “Odes”, and in the Habakkuk Pesher from Qurman it is omitted entirely; cf. the insightful discussion in James W.
architecture at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (or the bench-room specifically) had some special cultic function (see §4.5). On the other hand, the victory hymn of Judg 5 and the blessing of Moses in Deut 33 suggest a setting in the folk traditions of (northern) Israel.247 Therefore, in light of the divergent performance traditions of the biblical southern theophany motif, and owing to the fragmentary condition of the plaster, it is impossible to know whether Kajr4.2 is better characterised as a folk-song or a cultic hymn (or both); though we will return to this question with reference to the archaeological remains in chapter 4. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is possible to draw an inference of a more general nature.

That is, despite their different performance settings, what unites the four biblical songs is the theme of thanksgiving for God’s protection of his people. What is more, in three of the four songs (Judg 5; Ps 68; and Hab 3) the imagery is explicitly militaristic. As such, it may be inferred that the songs would have served (in part) to foster the solidarity of the theological community within which they were transmitted; i.e. those who fell under the divine protection.248 Given the remote—and potentially volatile (cf.

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248 Cf. the discussion of the Song of Deborah as a persuasion song in Terry Giles and William J. Doan, *Twice Used Songs: Performance Criticism of the Songs of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, Ma.: Hendrickson, 2009), 75–77. Note that in Micah 1:3–7 the
§4.7)—geographical setting of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, it is surely no coincidence that a song associating the deity with the South should be found on the walls. Regardless of whether it had a cultic function, Kajr4.2 must have served—at least implicitly—to give theological validity to the site; i.e. validation derived from the immanence of the warrior god (viz. YHWH of Teman, although he is not named in the extant portions of Kajr4.2). As such, the physical presence of Kajr4.2 was probably partly symbolic, displaying these credentials (visually, and perhaps through associated performances) to the inhabitants and anyone passing through the site.249

2.9. CONCLUSIONS

Bearing in mind that the purpose of this chapter is to answer the question what was written at Kuntillet ʿAjrud?, the foregoing discussion suggests five inferences that stand out as being particularly important for the study of textualisation and the phenomenon of writing on walls. However, because of the fragmentary state of the inscriptions, it must be stressed that these inferences are provisional and should be left open to refinement and revision as necessitated by future research.

First, the written material from Kuntillet ʿAjrud is characterised by its overall range and diversity. In addition to the literary plaster texts (and possibly Kajr3.9) there were a number of documentary texts, including possible administrative and educational pieces. Furthermore, as was discussed above, there are grounds to suppose that one or more literate individuals were stationed at the site on a (semi)permanent basis. Yet it is not clear how many people were productively involved in the act of writing at Kuntillet ʿAjrud—perhaps it was only two or three individuals,
although given the variety of handwriting styles on the pithoi it might have been more.\textsuperscript{250} Regardless of the number of individuals involved, the significance of this evidence is that literary text production at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud emerged within a broader writing culture.

Second, the references to YHWH of (the) Teman in \textit{Kajr} 3.6, 3.9, 4.1, together with the theophany in \textit{Kajr} 4.2, and the (possible) reference to Cain/Kennites in \textit{Kajr} 4.3 draw a direct connection between the written artefacts at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and the geographical location of the site. In other words, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is situated precisely in the region traditionally associated with YHWH’s theophany. This supports the view that at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud the literary texts drew inspiration from the immediate surroundings, and this perhaps hints at a direct correlation between the written material and activities conducted at the site. We will return to this in Chapter 4.

The third point relates to the question whether the KAPT’s intended primary audience was human or divine. Past commentators have tended to draw special attention to the apparently large number of blessings at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, typically interpreting these as prayers offered to the deity.\textsuperscript{251} However, as was discussed above, there is reason to believe that this number has been overestimated (cf. \textit{Kajr} 4.1 §2.6.1).\textsuperscript{252} In fact, only three texts (\textit{Kajr} 1.2, 3.1 and 3.6) explicitly refer to “blessing”. Moreover, in the case of the two epistolary formulae (\textit{Kajr} 3.1 and 3.6), the blessings

\textsuperscript{250} Allowance should be made for the possibility of deliberate variation in style (as discussed above).


\textsuperscript{252} As such, McCater’s observation that “[a]t Kuntillet ‘Ajrud the divine name ‘Yahweh’ occurs only in blessing formulas”, must be re-evaluated; cf. McCarter, “Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy”, 139.
were a standard feature of the epistolary tradition, and if they functioned as dedicatory offerings they were (probably) only secondarily such. In the case of the large stone basin, on the other hand, there can be little doubt that the vessel and its inscription served a dedicatory purpose. Therefore, it is only in the case of Kajr1.2 (and possibly the smaller stone bowls) that a divine audience can be assumed. In addition, Kajr4.2 (and perhaps Kajr3.9) is a special case insofar as it is related to a tradition of thanksgiving hymns addressed to the deity. However, the significance of Kajr4.2 is unclear. In the extant portion only the description of theophany is preserved (not the expression of thanksgiving), and there is no way of knowing how much more might have originally been included. As such, it is not clear whether the hymn was primarily intended for a divine audience, as a sort of prayer (cf. §2.4.2), or for a human audience, as a memorial to the immanence of the deity (see further §4.9).

Consequently, the notion that the KAPT included prayers directed to the deity cannot be affirmed on the basis of the extant material. At best, it remains a possibility in the case of Kajr4.2, and an unlikely possibility in the case of Kajr4.1. Of course, the two functions are not mutually exclusive, and in reality the texts might have served both benedictory and memorialising purposes.

On the other hand, it should be noted that there is no clear instance (other than the epistolary formulae), in which a human audience was directly addressed (cf. §2.6.6). In fact, as far as can be determined the KAPT are consistently framed in the third person, and each seems to have a retrospective aspect and descriptive quality. This broad agreement in

253 At another level, it should be noted that the immensity of the basin entails implicit connotations of prestige and piety that cannot have failed to impress a human audience.

254 That is, Kajr4.2 might have only contained a short excerpt, standing metonymically for the whole song and ultimately the wider tradition.

255 Kajr3.9 and 4.2, if songs, might have shifted from (retrospective) description to direct address as sometimes happens in biblical songs (e.g. the second person framing of the Song of Deborah, Judg 5:2–3, 31; or the alternation of grammatical person in Ps 23).
terms of outlook suggests that the KAPT (at least the texts nearest the entrance; cf. §4.9.2.1) can be viewed collectively as a functionally coherent and mutually informing group.

The fourth inference follows from the preceding observation about the functional coherence of the group. Put simply, the interrelatedness of the texts means they have collective significance that amounts to more than the sum of their parts. In effect, based on the evidence at hand, this means that the geographical and theological implications that pertain to the texts’ contents individually (esp. Kajr4.1–4.3) are magnified with regard to the group as a whole. In other words, when viewed collectively Kajr4.1–4.3 have a proclamatory force, grounding Kuntillet ‘Ajrud in its physical context, and reinforcing the message impressionistically through repetition with variation.

Finally, in a more general observation, it should be noted that the KAPT furnish evidence for the textualisation at a relatively early date of traditional stories (Kajr4.3) and songs (Kajr4.2, and perhaps Kajr3.9), comparable to those found in the Hebrew Bible.
Chapter 3

WHO WROTE THE KUNITLET ‘AJRUD PLASTER TEXTS?

Insofar as a text may be considered a written artifact, its linguistic classification can offer potentially significant insights into its authorship, (intended) audience, and cultural context. The same is true of orthography and palaeography, to the extent that it may be possible to identify standardisation with a particular educational tradition. But that is not to say that culture and dialect are one and the same. In the preceding chapter the comparative method was used to situate the KAPT within the folkloric continua of the ancient Northwest Semitic cultures, highlighting the peculiarly Hebraic quality of the theophany (*Kajr* 4.2). Linguistic classification provides a tool for further refining and interpreting those relationships. This is particularly important in the case of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, due to the enigmatic nature of the inscriptions and the important place they occupy in discussions of ancient Israelite folk religion.

Ever since Meshel first announced the presence of inscriptions written in “Phoenician” script, speculations have abounded as to the nature and extent of Phoenician involvement at the site.\(^1\) Consequently, the following discussion will consider the question of authorship under four headings: morphology/syntax, phonology/orthography, onomastics, and palaeography, paying particular attention to the question of Phoenician influence. Consideration will also be given to differentiation between northern and southern Hebrew dialects. It will be argued that the cumulative evidence suggests that the KAPT were written by, or at the behest of, the Israelite inhabitants at the site.

\(^1\) See Mastin, “Who built and used the buildings at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud?”, 69–85, esp. 69.
3.1. MORPHOLOGY/SYNTAX

3.1.1. Pargogic nun

Two examples of paragogic nun occur in Kajr4.2 (וימסן; וידכן). While, the paragogic nun is relatively common in BH,² it is exceptionally rare in Phoenician, occurring in two late inscriptions only (KAI 14, and KAI 60), both of which are possibly influenced by Aramaic.³ Crucially, there are no unquestioned examples of paragogic nun in early Phoenician inscriptions.⁴ Consequently, its presence in Kajr4.2, a text that contains Pheonician style palaeography (see below), suggests Hebrew affiliation.

3.1.2. Hipʿil conjugation

The ḫē prefix of the C-stem verbs הנשב (Kajr4.1) is in accordance with the Hebrew hipʿil conjugation, in contradistinction to the Phoenician yifʿil conjugation.

3.1.3. Wāw consecutive

Two possible examples of the wāw consecutive appear in the KAPT: וישבעו ֯ (Kajr4.1); יתנו ו (Kajr4.1).⁵ Although common in Hebrew, the wāw

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³ Johannes Friedrich and Wolfgang Röllig, Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik (2nd ed.; AnOr 55; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1999), 82 §135, n.2; cf. McCarter, “Kuntillet ʿAjrud: Plaster Wall Inscription” (COS 2.47D:173, n.3); Meshel, Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 135 n.10.

⁴ For the sole possible exception, see Mastin’s discussion of ידללה in the Kilamuwa inscription (KAI 24.10); Mastin, “The Inscriptions Written on Plaster at Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 107–08.

⁵ I exclude והם (Kajr4.2) and ידכ (Kajr4.2) from consideration on the basis of the paragogic nun (cf. §2.6.2).
consecutive is virtually unknown in Phoenician. However, in each case the wāw might be the simple copulative, and, as such, this isogloss is of uncertain value.

3.2. PHONOLOGY/ORTHOGRAPHY

3.2.1. Matres lectionis

The following matres lectionis (m.l.) are attested at Kuntillet 'Ajrud:

**Final m.l. yôd representing long -î**
- 1.c.s. pronominal suffix, “my lord” (Kajr3.6)
- 3.m.s. jussive, “and may he be” (Kajr3.6)
- ad. gent. “Egyptian” (Kajr3.10)

**Final m.l. wāw representing long -û**
- 3.c.p sufformative, “they will be satisfied” (Kajr4.1)
- 3.c.p sufformative, “they will give” (Kajr4.1)
- DN (Kajr1.2; 3.9); however, both readings are questionable. Furthermore, as Sandra Gogel observes, “-yhw may have been vocalized yahwē (where wāw is etymological), rather than -yahū”.

**Final m.l. hê representing long -â**
- PN, “ʾAdâh” (Kajr2.2)
- PN, “ʾAdnāh” (Kajr1.2)
- PN, “Yawʾasâh/Yôʾasâh” (Kajr3.1)

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fatḥah—verb 3.m.s. pf., “entreat” (Kajr3.9)

Final m.l. hē representing -ô (?)

fatḥah—3.m.s pronominal suffix, “his asherah” (Kajr3.1; 3.6; 3.9)

fatḥah—3.m.s pronominal suffix, either: “according to all that is in his mouth,” or “according to his heart’s desire” (Kajr3.9)

Final m.l. ʾālep representing -ā

ʿāyīrah—PN, “ʿIrāʾ/lʿAyirāʾ” (Kajr2.2)

Although final -ā is represented for PNN and for the 3.m.s. perfect verb fatḥah “entreat” (Kajr3.9), it is omitted for the 2.m.s pronouns: ʾattā (. . .)

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8 The 3.m.s. pronominal suffix is a special case. In Tiberian Hebrew the form of the suffix is -ô (-ô). The usual explanation for the development of this suffix is *-ahu > *-au > *-aw > -ô; cf. Edward Lipiński, Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar, (OLA 80; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oosterse Studies, 1997), §36.20. However, at Kuntillet ʿAjrud final m.l. wāw is used to represent long -ā, which might suggest that the contraction to *-ô had already taken place; cf. Ziony Zevit, Matres Lectionis in Ancient Hebrew Epigraphs (ASOR monograph series 2; Cambridge, Ma.: ASOR, 1980), 17 §23, 26. But in that case week would expect the contraction of the diphthong to be resolved with final m.l. wāw as in northern theophoric PNN (see below). This might suggest that the underlying form was closer to Aramaic 3.m.s. ʾî—with its results from the syncope of intervocalic hē. Prefering to retroject the later pronunciation -ô onto the spelling ʾî, they suggested that the underlying form was *-aw and explained the spelling ʾî- as a result of the generalised use of hē to represent any word terminal vowel other than -î or -û. In this case, the resemblance to the 3.m.s. pronoun ʾînî would be coincidental; cf. Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, Spelling in the Hebrew Bible: Duhoo Memorial Lecture (Biblia et Orientsia 41; Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1986), 39–44. This is possible, but it is pure conjecture. In short, it is safest to conclude with Andersen and Forbes that we cannot be certain about the pronunciation of the early 3.m.s. Hebrew suffix when it is spelled with hē.

9 In Kajr4.1 the final m.l. is restored.
Kajr3.6; cf. 4.6), ישמרך (yismērekā; Kajr3.6), and ברכתך (bēraktikā; Kajr3.6). Similarly, the final m.l. is omitted for the first person pronoun -ī in הבדק (bēraktī; Kajr3.1);10 though it is used to mark the 1.c.s. possessive suffix in אדני (ʾădōnī; Kajr3.6), and the 3.m.s. possessive suffix represented by -ḥē is written for אשרה, and וכלבה/כלבבה (Kajr3.9). Wāw is used to mark the 3.m.p. sufformative -ū in ישבעו and ישנו (Kajr4.1). While the tendency to omit final m.l. for the pronominal endings of verbs is attested in epigraphic Hebrew, it is by no means universal.11

The function of 'ālep in the 3.m.s. independent personal pronoun אֶל (ḥū; Kajr1.2, 3.9) is uncertain; Sandra Gogel notes that this spelling may either be historical, a final m.l., or a consonant (i.e. *huʾ ā).12

There is no unequivocal evidence for internal m.l. at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. It is possible that an internal m.l. is used to represent -ī- in the PN עירא (Kajr2.1; cf. BH יִירָא, 2 Sam 20:26; 23:26, 28; 1 Chr 11:28, 40; 27:9).13 However, עירא might also be etymologically related to עֵיר, “male ass”, in which case the PN should be vocalised 'āyra’ (or 'ayirā’ if triphthongisation had taken place), and the yōd understood to represent the diphthong rather than a true m.l.14 This possibility is further supported by

10 The omission of the m.l. might be for phonological reasons. Rollston, citing a personal correspondence form McCarter, observed that in rare instances in the MT the yōd is omitted from the 1.c.s. perfect suffix (cf. Ps 140:12 Heb.13; Job 42:2; 1 Kgs 8:48). This might suggest that the vowel of the suffix may, at times, have been lost or shortened in speech; see Christopher A. Rollston, “Scribal Education in Ancient Israel”, 62, n.40; cf. Francis. I. Andersen, “Orthography in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions”, Ancient Near Eastern Studies 36 (1999): 5–35; Ian Young, “Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions”, 306, §3.4.2.5, §4. Nevertheless, the cumulative data from Kuntillet 'Ajrud suggest that final m.l. were routinely omitted for pronominal suffixes.


12 Gogel, A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew, 153, n.179.

13 This was the vocalisation adopted by Ahituv et al.; Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 79.

the spelling of "city" (Kajr2.4–2.6; cf. BH ייר), which is written *defectively*, without internal *m.l.* Similarly, there is no internal *m.l.* representing long -ǐ- in the plural endings ימתמ (yomīm; Kajr4.1); רڏ (hārīm; Kajr4.2); [פבת; Kajr4.2] (pabunīm; Kajr4.2); [טılm; Kajr4.2), or long -ơ- in בים (bēyōm; Kajr4.2). Nor is there an internal *m.l.* representing long -ū- in the *qal* passive participle בָּרָך (bārūk Kajr1.2). The retention of the diphthong might indicate that this PN is Judahite in origin (see below). However, it should also be noted that Kajr2.1 was inscribed in an archaic script, unlike any of the other inscriptions at the site and, as such, might not have originated at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. In any case, the representation of medial vowels does not seem to have been standard practice at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

The PN יועשה (vocalised yôʿāšāh by Aḥituv et al.) supplies the only other evidence for the possible use of an internal *m.l.* at Kuntillet 'Ajrud. However, the vocalisation proposed by Aḥituv et al. is far from certain, and in this case too it seems preferable to interpret the *wāw* of the theorphoric element as the (uncontracted) diphthong aw (see below).

Of the five inscriptions commonly held to be written in the Phoenician script (Kajr4.1–4.5, see below), only Kajr4.1 (and possibly Kajr4.6, if *את* is understood to be a 2.m.s. independent pronoun) contains words ending in vowels: וּישַׁבָּהוּ and יִתְנו. Significantly, both of these evince final *m.l.* The uncertain reading *את* (≈ʾattā) in Kajr4.6 does not have a final *m.l.*, but this is to be expected on the basis of the spelling of the same pronoun in Kajr3.6.

In sum, the presence of final *m.l.* in the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud suggests an affiliation with Hebrew rather than Phoenician orthography, which tended to be more conservative, rarely employing

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The lack of any undisputed occurrence of internal m.l. is not surprising given the early 8th century context.\(^{17}\)

3.2.2. *Omission of the definite article in שער* 

Alessandro Catastini saw the omission of the definite article in the expression \(לשרער\) (\(Kajr\) 2.4–2.6, §2.3) as an indication of Phoenician authorship.\(^{18}\) According to Friedrich and Röllig, the definite article was not regularly used in Phoenician until ca.700 B.C.E., and even then it was often omitted in titles.\(^{19}\) However, Biblical Hebrew evinces a similar tendency to omit the definite article in titles (Joüon §137r).\(^{20}\)

However, the explanation for the lack of the article may also be phonological. If the spelling \(שרער\) implies that the title was conceived as a compound noun (e.g. the analogous \(את־בית־מלך\), 1 Kgs 16:18; cf. the expected \(את־בית־המלך\)), then the omission of the article may simply reflect

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\(^{18}\) Catastini, “Le Iscrizioni di Kuntillet ‘Ajrud e il Profetismo”, 128, and nn. 7–8. Note that Catastini suggested reading Phoenician \(dālet\) instead of \(‘ayin\) (i.e. \(שרדר\) “governor of the community”) reinforcing his belief in a significant Phoenician presence at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. However, in light of the published photographs this reading is no longer viable (see §2.3).


\(^{20}\) Moreover, Gogel was able to identify a number of additional epigraphic Hebrew examples in which the article is absent where syntactically it is expected; Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew*, 174–75, and n. 206; cf. Gad B. Sarfatti, “Heberw Inscriptions of the First Temple Period: A Survey and Some Linguistic Comments,” *Maarav* 3 (1982):71–73 §6.
spoken pronunciation. In an apparently analogous development, Gad Sarfatti, citing Robert Gordis, noted that there was a certain tendency for the omission of the article in the *ketib* variants of the MT (“corrected” by the restoration of the article in the *qere*), most notably in nouns in the construct state. A similar omission of the article is also evinced in Mishnaic Hebrew. Accordingly, Sarfatti argued on the basis of these later parallels that the omission of the article may simply reflect common pronunciation in non-literary or popular speech.

Even so, it is important to bear in mind, that since these vessels were probably inscribed before being transported to the site, the spelling of (しょうりゅう) may have little direct bearing on the question of text production at Kuntillet ’Ajrud itself (cf. §2.3).

3.2.3. *The ay diphthong*

The diphthong *ay* is represented in (תימן (*Kajr*4.1 x2); (Kajr4.1); (Kajr4.2); (Kajr4.3) and possibly in the PN (Kajr2.1). However, it is omitted in (תמן (*Kajr*3.6, 3.9). It is axiomatic in pre-exilic Hebrew dialectology that in northern (Israelite) phonology and orthography the diphthong contracted, resulting in the elision of the *yod*, as in Phoenician and Ugaritic, whereas in the southern (Judahite) dialect the diphthong was retained. This phenomenon is

21 Cf. Sarfatti, “Hebrew Inscriptions of the First Temple Period”, 72, who also cited the *ketib* (qere) in 1 Kgs 15:18; 2 Kgs 11:20; 15:25). The phonological argument was also considered by the editors; Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 81.


23 Note that the dialectical argument is particularly strong with regard to ( נשין, as the shortened form (משין is attested in *Kajr*3.6—a text that contains the northern theophoric PN (אמור) (cf. §3.4).

24 See, for example, Sabatino Moscati, et al., *An Introduction to Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology* (PLO 6; Wiesbaden: Otto
attested most clearly in the spelling יין “wine” (cf. יין Arad ostraca; BH יין) in the Samaria ostraca (8th century). Aḥituv et al. have drawn attention to the fact that at Kuntillet 'Ajrud the diphthongs are only represented in the plaster inscriptions (although see the discussion of_above), which might suggest that the KAPT were produced by a Judahite author. At first glance, this dialectical interpretation seems persuasive. But, the onomastic evidence and the reference to יהוה of Samaria in Kajr3.1 suggests that Kuntillet 'Ajrud was predominantly occupied by inhabitants from the northern kingdom of Israel (see below), and, as such, it is surprising to find signs of a Judahite scribe (or at least a scribe educated in

Harrassowitz, 1980), 54–55; Andersen and Forbes, Spelling in the Hebrew Bible, 44–49; Gogel, A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew, 48–49; P. Kyle McCarter Jr. “Hebrew,” in The Ancient Languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia (ed. Roger D. Woodard; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46–47, §3.2.2.3, 51–52, §3.6.2; Geoffrey Khan, “The Language of the Old Testament”, in The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From Beginnings to 600 (eds. James C. Paget and Joachim Schaper; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16–17, and 18, n. 40. It should be noted that the phenomenon of generalised diphthong contraction in the North has been questioned in some quarters; cf. Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensvärd, Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts, vol. 1 (London: Equinox, 2008), 183, 187. However, the consistency with which the pattern of diphthong contraction and retention is demonstrated in the inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajurd (i.e. in the GN Teman), testifies to the validity of the phenomenon.

The spelling חַרְנָה (= חַרְנָה* cf. Greek Αὐρωπα) in Tell Qasile Ostracon 2 is sometimes also cited as evidence of diphthong contraction; cf. Garr, Dialect Geograhy of Syria-Palestine, 37–38. However, the significance of this spelling is unclear. In the Tell Qasile Ostracon 2 the noun חַרְנָה (either GN or DN) occurs in the syntagm בחַרְנָה; where yod apparently indicates the uncontracted diphthong in בח ("house of" or "temple of"). This is the inverse of the progression in Samarian Hebrew, where the ay diphthong appears to have contracted earlier than the aw diphthong (if the evidence of the theophoric element in PNN can be relied upon, see below). In addition to this orthographic ambiguity, it should be noted Tell Qasile Ostracon 1 includes a PN with the southern (not the northern) theophoric element יהו (see below). However, given that both inscriptions were found on the surface of the tell, it is difficult to know what (if any) relationship might exist between them. For the Greek cognate Αὐρωπα = חַרְנָה*, see William F. Albright, “The Canaanite God Haurôn (Hörôn)” AJSL 53 (1936): 1–12.

26 Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 126–27.
the Judahite orthographic tradition) writing prominently on the walls of the complex. However, the evidence for dialectical variation may not be as clear-cut as it first appears.

First of all, as has been noted by Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvård, it is possible that the spelling י in the Samaria Ostraca is purely orthographic, without revealing anything about the underlying phonological situation. That is, it might be that in the orthography of Samarian Hebrew the ay diphthong was treated as an ordinary vowel and so was not represented. In this case, the representation of diphthongs should be regarded as an orthographic innovation, equivalent to any other plene spelling. This suggestion would allow for either spelling on phonological grounds, but it does not explain why both spellings are attested side by side at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (note especially the occurrence of both plene and defective spellings in תימן and תמן).


28 By “Samarian Hebrew” I mean the Hebrew vernacular that was written (and presumably spoken) in texts associated with the northern capital. This, of course, includes the Samaria ostraca, but if the reference to YHWH of Samaria in Kajr3.1 may be taken as an indication of the place of origin for the original letter fragment, then it is highly likely that the dialect of the pithoi inscriptions (or, at least Kajr3.1) is also representative of the Samarian dialect.

29 It is interesting to consider whether this suggestion can be generalised beyond Hebrew. This possibility seems to be consistent with much of the available epigraphic evidence, especially regarding the representation of the diphthong in Aramaic, which evinces a remarkably full use of both final and (at a later stage) internal m.l. to represent long vowels. Furthermore, this possibility lessens the difficulty posed by the apparent revival of the diphthongs in later Galilean and Babylonian Aramaic, cf. Yochanan Breuer, “Aramaic in Late Antiquity”, in The Cambridge History of Judaism: Vol. 4, The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period (ed. Steven T. Katz; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 484–85. Ultimately, if the explanation for spelling variation is orthographic rather than phonological, then the nature of the relationship between the graphic representation of diphthongs and the development of m.l. needs to be reconsidered; cf. the discussion in Andersen and Forbes, Spelling in the Hebrew Bible, 42–55. However, this would require a thorough epigraphic study that far exceeds the scope of the present discussion.
The latter difficulty might be resolved in several different ways: (a) the variant spellings might reflect different educational traditions—although, this would probably (but not necessarily) still suggest a north/south regional divide (note the preference for *plene* spellings in Judahite texts); (b) the variant spellings might reflect individual preference or idiolect (note that on palaeographic grounds there is reason to believe that the pithoi and plaster inscriptions were written by more than one individual, see below); or (c) the variant spellings might indicate diglossia—that is, the pithoi inscriptions (especially the epistolary texts) might reflect a “low” vernacular (Samarian Hebrew) in which the diphthong had contracted, whereas the plaster inscriptions might reflect a “high” literary language in which the diphthong was preserved. We will consider the possibility of diglossia in greater detail below, but first let us return to the question of dialectical variation.

As noted above, Aḥituv et al. interpreted the retention of the diphthong as probable evidence of a Judahite scribe. However, Jeremy Hutton has further complicated the question by suggesting that the orthography of the plaster inscriptions might equally reflect a local (i.e. east-Sinaïtic or Negevite) vernacular. To support this suggestion Hutton cited the retention of the *aw* diphthong in the Edomite DN Qaus (ḳוש) as late as the early-6th century B.C.E. According to Hutton, if we assume that the retention of the *aw* diphthong is indicative of the situation

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31 Hutton, “Local Manifestations of Yahweh”, 200–02. Although, note that (ה)תימן (“, the) South”, implies a northern perspective.

32 Ibid, 201 and n.97. The DN is attested four times in two Edomite ostraca: once as the agent of blessing in the Horvat ’Uza Ostracon (‘וָetskְא, “I bless you to Qaus”) and three times (although in one instance as a restored reading) as a theophoric element in the Edomite ostracon from Tell el-Kheleifeh ([רֶנֹס] , [קִסְו] , [מְסַק] ). Hutton also adduced Eusebius’ rendering of the toponym Θαμαύν (Onom, 96.18-23; 102.7-10), although as Aḥituv has noted this might reflect the BH (Judahite) historical spelling; cf. Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 313; Hutton, “Local Manifestations of Yahweh”, 201, n.98.
regarding the *ay* diphthong, this might be taken as evidence that diphthongs were preserved in the dialect(s) of the southern Negev during the 8th century (although on the analogous retention of *aw* in Samarian theophoric PNN see below). This is certainly possible, but again it does not explain why the texts containing the uncontracted diphthong would be displayed in such a prominent position.

Yet another possibility is that the orthography of the plaster inscriptions might reflect fossilised (historical) spellings. That is, it may be that the preservation of the diphthong reflects an orthographic retention

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33 This inference is reasonable, but it is not assured. As Rendsburg has observed, “[o]ur experience with the treatment of diphthongs in other Semitic languages shows that what transpires with *aw* is generally true of *ay* and vice versa. When one is preserved, the other is preserved; when one is reduced, the other is reduced”; cf. Gary A. Rendsburg, “Monophthongization of aw/ay > ā in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic” in *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language, Vol. 2* (eds. C. H. Gordon and G. A. Rendsburg; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 94. However, it does not follow that the process of monophthongisation occurred simultaneously or followed the same time-frame for both diphthongs; indeed Joshua Blau has argued on the basis of the orthography of the Pentateuch that the process of monophthongisation probably occurred more rapidly and systematically for the *aw* diphthong than it did for the *ay* diphthong; cf. Joshua Blau “The monophthongization of diphthongs as reflected in the use of vowel letters in the Pentateuch” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (eds. Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin and Michael Sokoloff; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 7–11; reproduced in Joshua Blau, *Topics in Hebrew and Semitic linguistics* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 21–25. On the other hand, the evidence of the Samaria Ostraca seems to suggest that in Samarian Hebrew the *ay* diphthong contracted earlier than *aw*, at least in PNN (see below). The fact that evidence for the preservation of the *aw* diphthong in Samarian Hebrew is only found in the theophoric element of PNN is of no importance at this juncture, as exactly the same situation obtains in the evidence for the preservation of *aw* in Edomite (i.e. DN and PNN). Finally, it is interesting to note that in Isa 21:11 the contraction ליל occurs in place of the expected לילו (one of three instances of this form in the MT, the other two occur in a prophecy against Moab in Isa 15:1). Isa 21:11 contains a prophecy against Edom, and it has been suggested that this contraction might reflect an attempt to represent Edomite pronunciation; cf. Ian Young, “The Diphthong *ay* in Edomite” *JJS* 37 (1992): 27–30. If correct this would rather suggest the contraction of *ay* in Edomite too.
from a period before generalised diphthong contraction. In this regard, it is
interesting to compare the situation in the Mesha Stele (9th century
Moabite), in which the diphthongs ay and aw appear to be preserved in the
gentilic דבש (lines 1–2) and the GN חורנן (lines 31, 32), but have
apparently contracted throughout the rest of the inscription (although, cf.
the two spellings בות/-uri, lines 7 and 23, and 25, respectively, which might
indicate that the process of contraction was not yet complete).\(^\text{34}\) As
suggested by Garr, this might be taken as evidence that at the time of
inscription diphthongs were preserved in (certain) Moabite place names,
but had generally contracted in the spoken language.\(^\text{35}\) Garr has suggested
that similar historical spellings might also be preserved in GNN in the
northern Tell Qasile Ostracon 2 and the Beth-Shean Ostracon (i.e. בתי; cf.
the expected contraction בות; although in both cases the interpretation is
problematic).\(^\text{36}\) Certainly, the conservative nature of GNN affords an
attractive explanation for the evidence. But, while this explanation might
be extended to account for the spelling הבש in Kajr4.1, it does not account
for the apparent contraction of the diphthong (بوت) in the pithoi
inscriptions. Is it likely that an historical spelling would be preserved for
the GN in Kajr4.1 but not in the identical syntagm in Kajr3.6 and 3.9?
Moreover, this explanation does not account for the preservation of the
diphthong in the hipʿil verbs הבש הדבש (Kajr4.1). Nevertheless, the
suggestion of historical spellings hints at another possibility.

A fifth alternative, alluded to above, is that the variant spellings
might be diglossic. In other words, the orthography of the plaster
inscriptions might be understood to reflect an archaic—or archaising—
literary register. To this end, it is interesting to note that the theophany in
Kajr4.2 is a poetic composition that has clear ties to some of the oldest—

\(^{34}\) Cf. the discussion in Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine*, 37–38.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, 37–38.

\(^{36}\) Cf. Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* (FAT 5; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul
Siebeck), 1993), 116–17. On the difficulties posed by the Tell Qasile Ostracon, see n.25
above.
or at least, most conservative—poetry of the Hebrew Bible (see §2.8.2). By comparison, there is little that can be said with confidence about the contents of Kajr4.3, but it, nonetheless, seems to have a retrospective narrative quality, consistent with a mythopoeic register (see §2.6.3). The same may also be said of the difficult Kajr4.1, especially if the verbs of the first line are translated as indicative rather than volitive. This is not to affirm that Kajr4.1 and 4.3 are necessarily literary-poetic texts, but simply to note that the possibility exists. But is there any evidence to support the hypothesis of a linguistically conservative literary register in the northern kingdom?

Unfortunately, no lengthy poetic or literary inscriptions survive from northern Israel. The closest comparandum is the Gezer Calendar (‘summer fruit’, line 7; cf. 2 Sam 16:1), which apparently evinces diphthong contraction. However, the dialect and interpretation of the Gezer Calendar are debated, and despite being described as poetic, there is no evidence that it should be connected with a hypothesised “high” register. Consequently, in the absence of poetic or literary inscriptions

37 See the discussion above; cf. Na’aman, “The Inscriptions from Kuntillet ’Ajrud”, 310–12. Garr also considered the possibility that the yôd might be explained as an internal m.l. (otherwise unparalleled for this period), or as a borrowed spelling from a dialect in which the diphthong had not contracted; Garr, Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 38;

38 Of course, even if Kajr4.1 is interpreted as a benediction, the possibility remains that it reflects an archaic (or archaising) literary register.

39 Given the placement of ירחֽ֯קץ in line 7, and the fact that the bottom edge of the tablet is broken, it is possible that the calendar is incomplete, and that يרחֽ֯קץ was originally meant to read [...]ך[...ך in line 6 it is possible that the calendar is incomplete, and that ירחֽ֯קץ was originally meant to read [...ך[...ך in line 6]

39 Given the placement of ירחֽ֯קץ in line 7, and the fact that the bottom edge of the tablet is broken, it is possible that the calendar is incomplete, and that ירחֽ֯קץ was originally meant to read [...ך[...ך as in the lines above. Note, in this connection, that regardless of whether ירחֽ֯קץ in lines 1, 2, and 6 is a dual form, the number of months does not amount to twelve.

40 Compare the discussion of Ian Young, “The Style of the Gezer Calendar and Some ‘Archaic Biblical Hebrew’ Passages”, VT 42 (1992): 362–65, who concluded that “the linguistic peculiarities of the Gezer Calendar are best set in the context of the ABH style”. However, while I agree with Young’s general assessment that the Archaic Biblical Hebrew poetic corpus might be explained in terms of style and register, it remains possible, in light of the antiquity of the tablet, that the archaic characteristics of the Gezer
from a northern dialect area, it is pertinent to turn to biblical evidence. More specifically, it is necessary to isolate a selection of texts for which a northern provenance can reasonably be inferred, and which are likely to reflect a conservative register. To this end it is interesting to compare the orthography of Judges 5, Deuteronomy 32, and the blessings of the northern tribes in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33. Each of these passages has been plausibly connected with the northern tribes, and each belongs to the corpus of Archaic Biblical Hebrew (ABH) poetry, which is typified by its highly conservative linguistic profile.41

Intriguingly, there is no evidence for the contraction of diphthongs anywhere in these chapters. In fact, in a number of instances the ay diphthong is clearly represented:42 e.g. פִּנִי (Judges 5:16, 27 x2; Gen 49:10, 14),43 קִני (Judges 5:24);44 יָכִין (Gen 49:11, 12; Deut 32:38; cf. suffixed יָכִין)

Calendar are simply genuine archaisms. Moreover, it is possible that the language and orthography of the Calendar reflect a mixture of conservative (ABH) and vernacular features; cf. Young, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew, 118–19.

41 The arguments in favour of the northern provenance of Judges 5 are well known and need not be rehearsed here. For the other songs see the discussion in Joel D. Heck, “A History of Interpretation of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33”, Bibliotheca Sacra 147 (1990): 16–31; Gary A. Rendsburg, “Israeli Features in Genesis 49” Marava 8 (1992): 161–70; idem., “Israelian Hebrew Features in Deuteronomy 33”, in Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy in Its Cultural Environment in Honour of Jeffrey H. Tigay (eds. Nili S. Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, Michael J. Williams; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 167–83; Paul Sanders, Provenance of Deuteronomy 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1996). In each case the arguments for the text’s provenance are complex, but a northern connection seems likely. For a discussion of the linguistic profile of ABH poetry see David A. Robertson, Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry (SBLDS 3; Missoula, Mont.: SBL, 1972); however, cf. Young, “The Style of the Gezer Calendar”, 362–75, who has emphasised the dialectical peculiarities of this corpus and has argued that archaic linguistic features and historical contents are not necessarily evidence of its antiquity.

42 In the examples that follow I have omitted instances of the ay diphthong preceding pronominal suffixes on plural and dual nouns (cf. Blau “The monophthongization of diphthongs, 22–23), and focussed on internal diphthongs.

43 Cf. Joüon §103n, who describes this form as the construct state of פִּנִי.
Deut 33:28); שָׁמָיְם (Gen 49:22; cs. Deut 33:27; cf. dual שָׁמַיִם Gen 49:12; suffixed שָׁמְיָם Deut 32:10); עַל (Gen 49:17 x2, 22 x2, 23; Deut 32:2 x2); אֲלֵילֶים (Deut 32:4, 12, 28, 39; 33:26); אָיִלֶים (Deut 32:14). It is also interesting to compare אתָה (Gen 49:24) with the contracted form אתָן in Job 12:19; 33:19.47

Of these four passages, only Deut 32 is preserved in the Qumran manuscripts. But there also the diphthong is uniformly represented: e.g. עַיִן 4QDeut⁴, col. I: frag. 2 (Deut 32:38); שָׁמָיְם 4QpaleoDeut', frag. 37 (Deut 32:10); עַיִלֶים 4QpaleoDeut', frag. 40 (Deut 32:14). The fragmentary nature of the Qumran witness precludes categorical statements, but it can at least be noted that, here too, there is no evidence for diphthong contraction in the manuscript tradition.

Of these examples, עַיִן (Gen 49:11, 12; Deut 32:33, 38) may be considered particularly significant as the contracted form עָי in the Samaria Ostraca is one of the primary data adduced to demonstrate the contraction of the diphthong in the North. Indeed, as Young, Rezette and Ehrensvärd

⁴⁴ Cf. יָיִן as a PN Gen 4:1–25, as a GN/people group Num 24:22; Josh 15:57, and as a common noun “spear” 2 Sam 21:16.
⁴⁵ On the origin and morphology of this poetic form, cf. GKC §103n, o; Joüon, §103m.
⁴⁶ Note that there is some evidence for diphthong contraction in the homophonous particle עַי “where?” (i.e. עָי, עָיָן; etymologically related to עָי “where?”), when it occurs in spoken contexts: 1 Sam 10:14; 2 Kgs 5:25 (Ketiv); Job 8:2; see the discussion in William Schniedewind and Daniel Sivan, “The Elijah-Elisha Narratives: A Test Case for the Northern Dialect of Hebrew”, JQR 87 (1997): 333–34.
have observed, the uncontracted form יַיִן occurs consistently throughout the Hebrew Bible, even where a northern association might be expected, e.g. narratives dealing with the northern prophets Hosea and Amos. In fact there is only one possible (probable) attestation of the contracted form known from the whole of the Hebrew Bible: i.e. יַיִי, “my wine” (Ps 141:5).

The consistency with which the ay diphthong is represented in these passages, balanced by the total lack of evidence for diphthong contraction, may be significant. As Francis Andersen has remarked, “[i]f any biblical compositions arose in a northern-dialect area, or passed through channels using such a dialect or following its spelling and conventions, the differences would show up in the defective spelling of ô ← *aw and ê ← *ay”.

Nevertheless, this observation must be treated with utmost caution, since the textual history of the chapters is unknown. It might easily have been the case that the songs were composed orally in the North but set down in writing in the South, according to the standards of southern pronunciation and orthography. Then again, it might also be that at some stage the spelling of these verses was updated to represent diphthongs; though, in that case, it is interesting to note the presence of a number of

49 Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts, 183; cf. Young, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew, 167–68.

50 See Gary A. Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew”, in Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew (ed. Walter R. Bodine; Dallas, Tex.: Summer Institute of Linguistics; Winona Lake, Ind.: Distributed by Eisenbrauns, 1994), 85–86. On the MT’s vocalisation יַיִי, rather than the expected יַניִי, see idem, “Monophthongization of aw/ay> ā in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic”, 107.


52 Cf., recently, Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach (SBLANEM 9; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2014), esp. 111 – 12, who argue convincingly that updating and variation was the norm, to the extent that the current form of text and script is of little or no value as a witness to the original.
remarkable defective spellings that are left unaltered. Of course, it is also possible that the orthography underwent a major updating sometime before the generalised use of internal m.l.; however, there is no clear proof for this.

My contention is not that the biblical text supplies positive proof for a conservative northern literary register in which diphthongs were preserved. Rather my intention is far milder, merely to note that there is no clear obstacle precluding the hypothesis of diglossia, and to raise the possibility that a “high” register might be reflected in the orthography of the plaster inscriptions at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.

But is this historically credible? There is evidence that the diphthong had already contracted by the Late Bronze Age in Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite. However, this has little bearing on the question of diphthong contraction in the Hebrew dialects. Indeed, the retention of both aw and ay in pre-exilic Judahite Hebrew, together with the probable retention of the

53 E.g. בְּכֹרִי (Gen 49:3; cf. plene בְּכֹרִי, Gen 38:6); כְּבֹדִי (Gen 49:6; cf. plene כְּבֹדִי, Gen 45:13); זְּבֻלוּן (Gen 49:6; cf. plene זְּבֻלוּן, 2 Chron 15:15); שְׁפֶר (Gen 49:30; cf. plene שְׁפֶר). For a number of examples in Deut 32, see Paul Sanders, Provenance of Deuteronomy 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 326–32. Interestingly the two spellings of Zebulun in Judges 5 זְּבוּלֻן (5:14), זְּבֻלוּן (5:18) suggest a phonetic spelling, and might point to a period before the use of m.l. was fully standardised; although, intriguingly, note that both spellings appear in Judges 4:10, 6 respectively, suggesting literary dependence (!).

54 Note that on the basis of the epigraphic evidence (of which, only a limited selection of the material from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was available) Young has proposed a similar scenario: “[i]f we still wished to retain the general dialectical tendency of Northern Hebrew to diphthongal reduction (which is not necessary to explain the evidence), we could suggest the following situation. The ‘correct’ High pronunciation was always with the diphthong, going back at least to the Jerusalem standardization of the High language. In daily speech, Northern Hebrew had undergone a general diphthongal reduction. Therefore any reduction appearing in the High language represent ‘slips’ or intrusions of this Low speech habit.” Young, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew, 117, cf. 199.

aw diphthong in northern PNN (see below), suggests that Hebrew stems from an ancestor in which diphthongs were retained.56 The Gezer Calendar seems to indicate that ay had contracted in some contexts by the 10th century, but this may reflect Phoenician rather than Hebrew convention.57 At the latest, the contraction of ay must have taken place in the Samarian vernacular by the 8th century (e.g. the Samaria Ostraca and Kuntillet 'Ajrud pithoi inscriptions). This means that any hypothesised diglossic situation need not have existed for more than a couple of centuries. However, there is no necessary durational constraint on diglossia, especially in the context of a living poetic tradition.58 An analogous situation occurs in the epic poetry of ancient Greece, in which numerous dialectical and archaic elements were preserved and transmitted over several centuries through both oral and written channels.59

3.2.4. The aw diphthong

The aw diphthong seems to reflect a different pattern of retention. At Kuntillet 'Ajrud aw is apparently represented in the theophoric elements וָי (Kajr1.1); שֶׁבֶר (Kajr1.2); וַיְלִי (Kajr1.3); וַיְלַי (Kajr3.1); וָלִי, שֶׁרְי, שֶׁבֶר (Kajr3.6); and וָלֵי (Kajr3.10). As noted above, there is some disagreement as to whether wâw in these names represents a diphthong -yaw- or a m.l. -yō- (resulting from diphthong contraction, i.e. *yahu > *yaw > *yō). However,

56 Unless the representation of the diphthong is viewed as an orthographic innovation.
both McCarter and Baruch Halpern have rightly observed that contraction of the diphthong (i.e. \( \text{yaw} > \text{yō} \)) is contra-indicated by the fact that the theophoric element is never spelled \( \text{יָה} \) (\( yō \)) in final position. The retention of the \( \text{aw} \) diphthong in PNN despite the contraction of \( \text{ay} \) is consistent with the orthography of the Samaria Ostraca (see §3.4).

3.2.5. Non-assimilation of \( nûn \) in \( שָׁנָה \)

The spelling \( שָׁנָה \) on the smaller fragment of \( \text{Kajr4.2} \) may be contrasted with Samarian \( שָׁנָה \), in which the \( nûn \) apparently assimilated (cf. \( בָּשָׂר \), “in the year”, in the Samaria Ostraca); however, the fragment is incomplete and other readings are possible (e.g. f.p. participle \( יִשְׁנָה \), \( [yē]\text{ṣumōt} \), “sleepers”), and, in any case, it remains a possibility that the orthography can be attributed to a conservative literary register (see above).

3.3. VOCABULARY

It has been noted that the root \( יָשָׁה \), “to be good”, although comparatively common in Hebrew, is unattested in Phoenician (cf. the Phoenician parallel \( נִנָּה \)).

3.4. ONOMASTICON

Twenty-eight personal names are attested in the corpus of inscriptions from Kuntillet \( \text{ʿAjrud} \) (see Appendix A). Of these, four consist of only one letter and so offer little by way of diagnostic evidence. Eight are incomplete: five broken on the left-hand edge so that the (possible) endings are missing (\([...]\text{עָבָד} \), \([...]\text{רָי} \), \([...]\text{יהָל} \), \([...]\text{שֵׁמעי} \), \([...]\text{גֶּד} \), and three

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61 See most recently, Shmuel Ahituv, “Notes on the Kuntillet \( \text{ʿAjrud} \) Inscriptions”, in See, \( I \) \( will \) \( b r i n g \) a \( s c r o l l \) recounting what befell me” (\( \text{Ps} \) \( 40:8 \)): Epigraph and Daily Life From the Bible to the Talmud (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2014), 31; cf. Mastin, “The Inscriptions Written on Plaster at Kuntillet \( \text{ʿAjrud} \)”, 108.
broken on the right-hand edge so that the (possible) beginnings are missing
(Nos. [..], [..], and [..]). This leaves sixteen complete names. Of
these, nine bear the *Yahwistic* theophoric element -יו-, eight as a suffix
(אל, שמי, אמור, תל, עבד, שמעון, ו), and one as a prefix
(וי). The compounding of the *Yahwistic* theophoric element suggests
the specifically Hebrew character of these PNN. More specifically, the
spelling of the theophoric element suggests an origin in the northern
kingdom of Israel rather than Judah. The *Yahwistic* element of Hebrew
PNN is known from biblical and epigraphic evidence in three basic forms:
-יהו- and י-יו-.62 The first of these -יו- (apparently resulting from
the syncope of intervocalic *hê*; i.e. *yahū* > *yaū* > *yaw*) is relatively well
attested as the standard form in northern (Israelite) PNN: although this
form also occurs in several southern (Judahite) PNN of the 8th
century (WSS 3, 4,63 663, and 67864). In southern PNN, however, the *Yahwistic*
element is normally spelled י-יהו- (i.e. without syncope of the *hê*).65 To date,

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62 For a thorough discussion of the 8th century *Yahwistic* onomasticon see Brian A.
Mastin, “The Theophoric Elements *yw* and *yhw* in Proper Names in Eighth-Century

63 Aḥituv et al. note the possibility that WSS 3 and 4 may simply have been engraved by a
scribe accustomed to the northern orthography; Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman),
136 n.12.

64 However, Aḥituv et al. argue that the three spellings יבנה, יהובנה, and יובנה
(WSS 676, 677 and 678, respectively), which apparently all belonged to the same individual, attest to
no more than the carelessness of the scribe; Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman),
136 n.12. As such, it is interesting to note that WSS 677 appears to have originally been
written without the wāw (cf. WSS 676), which was later inserted into the space between
the yôd and the *hê*; Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp
Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities; Israel Exploration
Society; Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 248–49.

65 The question has been raised as to whether the explanation for the two forms of the
*Yahwistic* element may in fact be chronological rather than purely regional, י- being
relatively more common in Judah in the 8th century; Alan Millard, “The Corpus of West
Semitic Stamp Seals: Review Article,” *IEJ* 51 (2001): 85; cf. Harold L. Gindsberg,
only one example of the יְהוָה form is attested in the North. This comes from port of Tell Qasile and, as such, its significance is uncertain (i.e. possible Judahite provenance). The fact that so many of the PNN at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud are compounded with the יי theophoric element, coupled with the complete absence of the יְהוָה theophoric element, is therefore taken as evidence for the predominance of Israelites at the site; an impression that accords well with the (possible) allusion to יְהוָה of Samaria in Kajr3.1.

On the basis of the unreduced diphthong, Johannes Renz has argued that the PN עירא (Kajr2.1) might be Judahite. However, as noted above, (1) עירא might be a local spelling; and (2) the palaeography appears to be considerably older than the other inscriptions, meaning there is no evidence that the individual named עירא was ever present at the site.

Significantly, each of these PNN (or their cognates) is attested in Hebrew sources, further reinforcing the impression that these individuals were from a Hebrew background. Two of the PNN are also attested in Ammonite sources (בֶּילָה, אַשָּׂא, and possibly [...]אֶשֶּׂ), and one is attested in Moabite (מְצַר). The gentilic מצרי (“Egyptian”) is attested more widely but this is hardly surprising as it could refer to anyone of Egyptian origin or descent.

It is interesting to note the complete lack of non-Yahwistic (e.g. Baalistic) theophoric names at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Though, this too is perhaps not surprising. In his careful analysis of theophoric PNN in the biblical and epigraphic sources, Jeffrey Tigay calculated a ratio of 89%

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66 See Mastin, “The Theophoric Elements yw and yhw”, 126. On the general dialectical ambiguity of Tell Qasile see above.

Yahwistic to 11% non-Yahwistic theophoric names out of 466 pre-exilic biblical individuals, and 94.1% Yahwistic to 5.9% non-Yahwistic theophoric names in pre-exilic epigraphic sources. However, as Tigay argued, the onomasticon of a society need not bear a direct correlation to the pantheon and religious experience of that society. Consequently, the lack of Baalistic names is of no use for determining whether בַּעַל in Kajr4.2 is DN or an epithet. That being said, PNN compounded with a Baalistic element are comparatively common in Phoenician sources from the first half of the first millennium B.C.E. Consequently, the absence of Baalistic names at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud suggests that none of the named individuals were of Phoenician origin. At this point it is also worth noting three seals (each with a patronymic containing the Yahwistic element יְהוֹ) that appear to have PNN compounded with אָשֶׁר (WSS 457, 579, and 580). Nahman Avigad suggested that this element is probably theophoric, standing for a male counterpart to Asherah. If this suggestion is correct,

68 Tigay, You Shall Have No Other Gods, 18. This includes the names from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.


70 Cf. the names שָׁבָר- and אָשֶׁר, attested on bronze arrow-heads dating from the 12th–10th centuries B.C.E. (John C. L. Gibson, Phoenician Inscriptions: Including Inscriptions in the Mixed Dialect from Arslan Tash (vol. 3 of Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions; ed. John C. L. Gibson; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1–8); שָׁבָר- (KAI 1); אָשֶׁר- (KAI 3); בַּעַל- (KAI 5); שֵׁפֶר (KAI 6); בַּעַל- (KAI 7); אָשֶׁר- on a bronze statuette from Seville, Spain (Gibson, Phoenician Inscriptions, 64–66); cf. the feminine PN אָשֶׁר (KAI 29); cf. WSS 713, 719, 726, 729–32, 743; see also the discussion and catalogue in Frank L. Benz, Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions (studia Pohl 8; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972), esp. 288–90.

71 Avigad and Sass, Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals, 486. Cf. already, Raphael Patai, “The Godess Asherah” JNES 24 (1965): 41; Tigay, You Shall Have No Other Gods, 65, n.3. As noted by Avigad, the age of these seals means that אָשֶׁר is unlikely to correspond to Assyrian aššûr.
then it is also worth noting the lack of any PNN compounded with an -רַשֶׁ element at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

3.5. Discussion

The linguistic evidence overwhelmingly supports a Hebrew classification, even for those texts written in the Phoenician script (see below). Furthermore, the onomastic evidence and the contraction of the ay diphthong in Kajr3.6, 3.9 indicate a northern, Israelite, affiliation. Even so, the retention of the diphthong in Kajr4.1–4.3 and the spelling נש in Kajr4.2 might indicate a Judahite affiliation for the plaster texts. But, as discussed above, this interpretation is not necessary to explain the evidence.

Finally, the onomastic evidence seems to support the inference that the cultic focus of the site was predominantly Yahwistic (cf. §2.4.1.1).

3.6. Palaeography

Already in 1977 Meshel had written of the presence at Kuntillet 'Ajrud of inscriptions in both Hebrew and Phoenician scripts.72 It is not surprising, then, that the palaeography of the inscriptions has received considerable attention over the years, with particular emphasis given to the classification of the scripts.73 The most recent and comprehensive palaeographic analysis is supplied in the editio princeps, where it is concluded that all of the inscriptions on clay and stone and one inscription

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written on plaster (Kajr4.6) reflect a Hebrew series, while the remaining plaster inscriptions (Kajr4.1–4.5) reflect a Phoenician series, similar to the script of the Karatepe inscription. In what follows, the evidence for this conclusion will be reviewed and implications discussed.

It is generally believed that the Hebrew script began to separate from Phoenician as an independent national script sometime during the 9th century B.C.E., although there are signs that the process may have begun in a limited sense somewhat earlier. The emergent Old Hebrew script is characterized by a number of features, including: (1) the elongation of vertical strokes in certain letters: e.g. ʾālep, wāw, kāp, mēm.

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74 Meshel, Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 74, 122.

75 Joseph Naveh, Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 53–124; cf. Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel, 377. For the political significance of this differentiation see Sanders, The Invention of Hebrew; idem., “Writing and Early Iron Age Israel”.

76 Central to this question is the identification of the debated scripts of the Gezer Calendar and the Tel Zayit abecedary; cf. Tappy et al., “An Abecedary of the Mid-Tenth Century B.C.E.”, 26–31. On the limitations of the evidence see Christopher A. Rollston, “The Phoenician Script of the Tel Zayit Abecedary and Putative Evidence for Israelite Literacy,” in Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context (eds. Ron Tappy and P. Kyle McCarter; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 61–96, esp. 83). Cross argued preferred to see the script of the Gezer Calendar as an emergent form of the early Hebrew script, referring in particular to the elongation of the vertical strokes or “legs” of such letters as ʾālep, wāw, kāp, mēm and rēs; Cross, “Newly Found Inscriptions”, 14; cf. Tappy et al., “An Abecedary of the Mid-Tenth Century B.C.E.”, 26–41, esp. 40–41. However, he admitted that these signs are “faint at best”; Cross, “Newly Found Inscriptions”, 14. But Joseph Naveh disagreed with even so cautious an assessment, stating, “The script of the Gezer Calendar..., although the earliest Hebrew inscription known to date, resembles the writing of the tenth-century B.C. Phoenician inscriptions from Byblos. At this stage no specifically Hebrew characters can be distinguished, and the Hebrew followed the scribal tradition current in Canaan”; Naveh, Early History of the Alphabet, 65; cf. Rollston, “The Phoenician Script of the Tel Zayit Abecedary”, 80.
and rēš;\(^\text{77}\) (2) a progressively cursive tendency reflected in the leftward curve of the down-strokes of the “long-legged” letter-signs: e.g. kāp, mēm and nūn;\(^\text{78}\) (3) the consistent use of the Y-shaped wāw with a semi-circular head, rather than the offset head that developed in the Phoenician and Aramaic traditions (e.g. ʿ);\(^\text{79}\) (4) the tāw began to rotate from a “cruciform” + shape, to a “reclining” × shape;\(^\text{80}\) and (5) toward the end of the century, a “cursive tick” (a short downward stroke) began to develop at the end of horizontal lines drawn left-to-right.\(^\text{81}\) I will discuss each feature in turn:

(1) Elongation can be seen across the entire corpus from Kuntillet ʿAjrud, including the inscriptions written in ink on plaster. However, Christopher Rollston has argued that elongation is reflected in each of the major West Semitic script series (i.e. Phoenician, Aramaic and Old Hebrew) and, therefore, elongation cannot, of itself, be considered a distinctive marker of a particular script series.\(^\text{82}\)

(2) The cursive tendency is likewise reflected across the entire corpus, although it is more pronounced in some inscriptions than in others (e.g. the exaggerated curvature on the down-strokes of the ʿāleps in Kajr3.1, 3.9 and esp. Kajr3.16, compared to the relatively straight down-

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\(^\text{77}\) Cross, “Newly Found Inscriptions”, 14; Rollston, “Scribal Education in Ancient Israel”, 53–58.


\(^\text{81}\) Cross, “Newly Found Inscriptions”, 14.


Notably, this cursive tendency is also reflected in the plaster inscriptions.

(3) The inscriptions written on stone and clay (both incised and dipinti) consistently use variations of the Y-shaped wāw. The incised wāws in Kajr1.1 and 1.2 consist of three lines with an angular head (fig.3.1.1–2) similar to the wāw in line 2 of the Gezer Calendar; in Kajr1.3 the head is angled to the right (fig.3.1.3). In Kajr3.1 (fig.3.1.4) the wāws are roughly symmetrical with a small semi-circular head, similar in shape and stance to the wāw of the Mesha inscription. In Kajr3.2 the wāw consists of two strokes: a broad slanting vertical shaft with a short bar intersecting about half-way down the right-hand side (fig.3.1.5). The wāws in Kajr3.6 also consist of two strokes: a vertical stroke angled to the right and a short curved stroke, which intersects from the left to form the head (fig.3.1.6). The wāws in Kajr3.9 and 3.10 consist of a wavy vertical shaft, intersected by a bar to form the head (fig.3.1.7). Clearly distinctive, however, are the wāws in Kajr4.1–4.3. These consist of a straight vertical shaft and an offset head formed by a curved bar, which intersects near the top left-hand edge of the vertical shaft (fig.3.1.8–10). This form is common to the Phoenician and Aramaic scripts. There are no examples of wāw preserved in Kajr4.4–4.6.

83 Note that Kajr2.13–23 were incised prior to firing, and before being transported to the site (cf. §2.3). As such, we cannot identify the writers of these signs directly with the scribes at Kuntillet Ḥjrud.

84 Apparently for historical reasons, Rollston described the ʿālep at Kuntillet Ḥjrud as “among the earliest exemplars of the cursive Old Hebrew ʿalep”, and used it as an anchor for his typological discussions; Rollston, “Scribal Education in Ancient Israel”, 54.

85 Although the shaft is elongated and the curvature of the head is less pronounced in Kajr3.1 than in the Mesha inscription.

86 This is a characteristically Hebrew development, cf. Naveh, Early History of the Alphabet, 94 (fig. 84: No. 13).

87 Ibid, 94. e.g. the Kilamuwa, Karatepe, Zakkur inscriptions, etc.
(4) The inscriptions on stone and clay consistently use the symmetrical \( \times \)-shaped \( \text{tāw} \) (e.g. fig.3.2.1). In \( \text{Kajr}3.13 \) the stance is more upright, but this may simply be due to the curved surface of the vessel (fig.3.2.2).\(^{89}\) In \( \text{Kajr}4.1 \) and 4.3 the left-hand line is elongated and slightly curved, and the right-hand line barely transverses the point of intersection (fig.3.2.3–4). In \( \text{Kajr}4.2 \) the right-hand line extends well beyond the point of intersection but is still relatively short compared to the elongated left-hand line (fig.3.2.5). This asymmetrical \( \text{tāw} \) (\( \text{Kajr}4.1–3 \) is similar to the \( \text{tāws} \) of the Karatepe inscription. In \( \text{Kajr}4.1.16 \) the right-hand arm hooks downward (fig.3.2.6), anticipating a later characteristic of the Phoenician \( \text{tāw} \). The closest parallel to the \( \text{tāw} \) of the KAPT (esp. \( \text{Kajr}4.1 \) is the \( \text{tāw} \) of the Deir ʿAlla script (although, the latter is more developed; cf. fig.6.1). \( \text{Kajr}4.6 \) uses the \( \times \)-shaped \( \text{tāw} \) but there is some elongation of the left-hand line (fig.3.2.7).

\[ \begin{array}{cccccc}
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \\
\times & \text{\( \times \)} & \text{\( \times \)} & \text{\( \times \)} & \text{\( \times \)} & \text{\( \times \)} & \text{\( \times \)}
\end{array} \]

(5) Cursive “ticks” are visible on \( \text{yōds} \) in \( \text{Kajr}3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.10, 3.12, 3.15 \) and possibly 1.3, although, the latter may only be a scratch in

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\(^{88}\) Figures are not to scale and are for illustrative purposes only.

\(^{89}\) Cf. the adjacent \( \text{šīn} \) which is also slightly askew.
the surface of the stone. In addition, a faint “tick” is visible on the zayin in Kajr3.10.

In addition to the above features, bêt, yōd and kāp may also be considered diagnostic.

(6) bêt: Rollston noted that in the Iron Age Phoenician cursive and lapidary series, bêt typically has a closed head and its stance is often upright or with the top leaning to the left (cf. Kajr4.1 and 4.3, and the unclear examples in Kajr4.4 and 4.5). In contrast, the Hebrew bêt is consistently drawn top-right, a trait that became more pronounced during the 8th–6th centuries (cf. Kajr3.1 and 3.6).90 However, it should be noted that these features may not be very pronounced during the 9th–early-8th centuries.

(7) yōd: in Kajr4.1 and 4.2 the yōd is small and upright, drawn with two strokes: a sweeping brush stroke, similar in shape to a “2,” and a short lateral bar. The angle between the upper horizontal and the vertical lines is slightly obtuse, which, as Zevit notes, is a characteristic development of the Phoenician yōd after the 8th century. In contrast, both angles of the “Hebrew” yōd tended to be acute.91

(8) kāp: in Kajr1.2 (fig.3.3.1), and in the pithoi inscriptions (e.g. fig.3.3.2–3), the kāp consists of a main shaft and two oblique strokes (cf. the kāps of the Samaria Ostraca and the Siloam Tunnel Inscription).92 However, in Kajr4.1 and 4.2 one of the oblique strokes is replaced by a short downward stroke attached to the left-most tip of the remaining stroke (fig.3.3.5–6). The kāps in Kajr4.3 are badly preserved, but they appear to reflect a similar shape to Kajr4.1 and 4.2 (fig.3.3.4). Similar kāps are found in the Phoenician inscriptions at Karatepe and on the lid of an ivory box from Ur. A similar form is also attested in the script represented in the

91 Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel, 377.
DAPT (see §6.6 and fig.6.1). This basic shape reflects an innovation shared with Phoenician and Aramaic but not with Hebrew.

![Symbol](image)

**Fig. 3.3—Comparison of kāp: (1) Kajr1.2; (2) Kajr3.1; (3) Kajr3.12; (4) Kajr4.1; (5) Kajr4.2.**

In light of the foregoing, the strongest indications of Phoenician script at Kuntillet ʿAjrud are the offset wāw, the asymmetrical and hooked tāw, the left-leaning bêt, the obtuse yōd and the Phoenician-style kāp. As concluded by Aḥituv et al., these features are most evident in the plaster inscriptions Kajr4.1–4.3 and possibly the more fragmentary 4.4. Kajr4.5 preserves too few letters to draw any conclusions.93

### 3.6.1 DISCUSSION

It remains to consider what implications the above observations hold for the identity of the writers at Kuntillet ʿAjrud. There are at least two conceivable explanations that might account for the use of Phoenician script in the KAPT: (1) the plaster texts may have been written by a scribe who learnt his letters in Phoenicia or according to the Phoenician tradition;94 or (2) the choice of script might have been optional, suggesting

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94 On the basis of the unreduced diphthong, Aḥituv, et al. preferred to understand the scribe as a Judahite who had learned the Phoenician script; Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 126. Mastin has argued that there are at most three extant inscriptions which show that the Phoenician script was used in Palestine south of Samaria in the 9th or 8th centuries B.C.E. By comparison, texts written in Phoenician script are relatively common north of Samaria; Mastin, “The Inscriptions Written on Plaster at Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 101–105; cf. Meindert Dijkstra, “I have blessed you by YHWH of Samaria and his Asherah: Texts with Religious Elements from the Soil Archive of Ancient Israel,” in, *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (eds. Bob Becking, et al.; The Biblical Seminar 77; London and New York, 2001), 22. However, the recent discovery near the Gihon spring in Jerusalem of a number of
that the Phoenician script retained the status of a “prestige script” at this time. In other words, the “Phoenician” script of the KAPT might reflect a literary book hand, distinct from the chancery hand represented on the pithoi. This would be consistent with the diglossic situation postulated above.

Following the careful work of Gerrit van der Kooij on the development of the early Northwest Semitic alphabetic scripts, it might be possible to give preference to the former option. According to van der Kooij, the divergence of the three major Northwest Semitic script traditions (viz. Phoenician, Hebrew, and Aramaic) can be attributed to changes in the angle used in handling the broad-nibbed implement used for writing in ink. Thus, Phoenician scribes tended to maintain the traditional writing angle of 45°–50°, while in Hebrew the angle narrowed to ca. 15°–30°. The consistency with which this pattern is repeated, along with concomitant changes to letter stance and shape, is best explained as a product of education. In other words, the handling technique of the writing implement was taught at the same time as the letter forms. This is


96 For the fullest discussion see Gerrit van der Kooij, “Early North-West Semitic Script Traditions. An Archaeological Study of the Linear Alphabetic Scripts up to c. 500 B. C.” (Ph.D diss., Leiden University, 1986).

significant, because it is not only the shapes of letters but also the writing angle that is mirrored in the KAPT written in Phoenician script (e.g. the shaft of the ʿaleps in Kajr3.1, 3.6, and Kajr4.1, 4.2). Given the fundamental nature of handling techniques—that is, the improbability of ad hoc changes in grip and ductus—this differentiation suggests that the writer of Kajr4.1–4.5 was trained in the Phoenician tradition, rather than a Hebrew scribe emulating Phoenician forms. It is possible that Kajr4.1–4.4 were written by a single hand. Kajr4.6 tells a different story. The unusual shape of the šīn and the elongation of the lamed indicated that this inscription was written by a different hand. The shape of the mêm with the hooked tail is reminiscent of the mêms in Kajr3.6 and the abecedaries, but in this text, too, the steeper writing angle is evinced (e.g. the rêš in line 2 and 3, and the ʿālep in line 2). Was this perhaps a scribe trained in the Phoenician tradition, but attempting to reproduce Hebrew letter forms? Whatever the case, as was discussed above, the orthography and morphosyntax of the KAPT suggest a Hebraic scribe(s).

3.7. Conclusions

Palaeographic, orthographic, and onomastic considerations suggest that all of the inscriptions on stone and clay (and perhaps Kajr4.6) were written in northern (Israelite) Hebrew. On palaeographic grounds Kajr4.1–4.4 show signs of Phoenician influence in the training of the scribe. However, there is evidence in Kajr4.1–4.3 for the retention of the ay diphthong; a decidedly un-Phoenician trait. This might be an indication that Kajr4.1–4.3 were written by a Judahite scribe, but, as was argued above, this is not a necessary conclusion. Kajr4.5 is too fragmentary to draw any conclusions.

Prima facie the evidence seems to suggest that the KAPT should be differentiated from the other inscriptions, inasmuch as the palaeography (and perhaps orthography) suggests that the scribes were educated in different traditions. In socio-linguistic terms, the differentiation might be

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98 Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 126–27.
viewed as a form of anti-language; perhaps left by a Judahite scribe wanting to subvert the prevailing Israelite socio-linguistic order. However, the references to YHWH of (the) Teman (Kajr3.6, 3.9, and 4.1) written in both Hebrew and Phoenician scripts across both pithos and plaster inscriptions, suggest a basic continuity throughout the inscriptions. Hence, while they were apparently written by different scribes, the texts can probably be attributed to a single community. If the onomasticon—especially within the epistolary fragments—can be relied upon as an indication of the identity of the residents at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, then the evidence seems to suggest that the site was administered by individuals from the northern kingdom of Israel. This inference is consistent with the evidence for diphthong contraction in the pithoi inscriptions, and, as has already been noted, it is supported by the reference to YHWH of Samaria in Kajr3.1 (cf. §2.4.1.1). Hence, while it is possible that the KAPT were inscribed by a non-Israelite scribe, it seems likely that this was done under the guidance and approval of the Israelite administration. We will return to this in the next chapter.

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Fig. 3.4—(1) Kajr1.2; (2) Kajr1.3; (3) Kajr3.6; (4) Kajr3.9; (5) Kajr4.1; (6) Kajr4.2; (7) Kajr4.3; (8) Kajr4.4; (9) Gezer Calendar, 10th century B.C.E.; (10) Mesha Stele, mid-9th century B.C.E.; (11) Samaria Ostraca, late-9th century B.C.E.; (12) Siloam Tunnel inscription, 8th century B.C.E.; (13) Karatepe inscription, mid-8th century B.C.E.; (14) Ivory box, Ur, ca. 7th century. *Note that figures are for illustrative purposes only, they do not have scientific precision.
Chapter 4

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE KUNTILLET ʿAJRUD PLASTER TEXTS

It remains to consider what the physical context of the KAPT reveals about their origin, purpose, and the manner in which they would have been encountered. To this end, we will begin by considering Kuntillet ʿAjrud in its environmental and historical context, before turning to a spatial analysis of the KAPT.

4.1. TOPOGRAPHIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Arab. “the solitary hill of the water source”\(^1\)) is situated in the eastern Sinai Desert about 50km south of Kadesh Barnea (Tell el-Qudeirat) and about 15km west of the Darb el-Ghazzeh, the ancient overland route connecting the Mediterranean coast with the Red Sea at Eilat.\(^2\) The settlement was constructed on a narrow hilltop, aligned on an east-west axis, at the eastern end of the Wadi Quriaya. The prominent mound rises approximately 23m above the floor of the wadi, and dominates the surrounding landscape. Several wells near the base of the

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\(^1\) The modern Hebrew name Horvat Teman was assigned by the excavators because of the inscriptions referring to “YHWH of (the) Teman”; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), IX.

hill provide one of the few perennial water sources in the region. The regional importance of the water source is attested by the modern Arabic name.\(^3\) The wadi itself may have provided a natural east-west route through the central Sinai.\(^4\) These factors led Meshel to suggest that an important crossroad might have existed near the site; although the archaeological remains give no clear indication of western contact (see below).\(^5\) Lars Axelsson went further in his study of Southern Judah and the Negev, and postulated that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud could be specifically identified as the דרך הר־שעיר “the way of Mount Seir” (Deut 1:2), which he believed was a western branch of the Darb el-Ghazzeh connecting Kadesh Barnea with southern Sinai.\(^6\) Ultimately, the relationship of the site to the Darb el-Ghazzeh and surrounding routes is unclear.\(^7\)

The climate in the eastern-Sinai is dry, with little precipitation, and the high water table that supplies the wells is supported by a network of

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\(^3\) Cf. the modern reports by Palmer and Musil (see below). The distance from the wells at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud to the spring at ‘Ain el-Qudeirat, was about 1.5–2 days journey; cf. James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 120.


\(^5\) Ibid, 3. Bones of Nile Perch were identified among the faunal remains (see below); however, as this was a commodity traded throughout the Levant, it cannot be taken as evidence for direct contact with Egypt; cf. ibid, 332. In any case, it is not clear why traders or travellers would pass through the difficult Central Sinai, rather than the easier coastal road to the north.


wadis that collect runoff from occasional rainstorms and flash-floods in the highlands of central Sinai. The summit of the hill can be subject to harsh winds and extreme summer heat, both of which were experienced by the excavators over the course of the three excavation seasons.

4.2. EXPLORATION AND EXCAVATION

The first published description of Kuntillet 'Ajrud was written by the English orientalist Edward Palmer, who visited the site (known to him as Contellet Garaiyeh) in 1870. Interestingly, Palmer’s description implies that the site was regionally known: “we were bound for some ruins, called Contellet Garaiyeh, of which we had heard”. He described Kuntillet 'Ajrud as a fortress on a white hill with a slight depression on the summit. Of particular interest is his reference to the discovery of several storage jars embedded in the walls, including one with a Phoenician ʾālep on its shoulder. Palmer also referred to wells at the foot of the hill, which were dry at the time of his visit. Based on the location and architectural remains, Palmer proposed that Kuntillet 'Ajrud could be identified with

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8 Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 3; cf. Hoffmeier, Ancient Israel in Sinai, 45.
9 Ibid, X; cf. the earlier description of Edward H. Palmer, The Desert of the Exodus: Journeys on Foot in the Wilderness of the Forty Years’ Wanderings II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1871), 341: “the weather was frightfully hot, and as a sandstorm had been blowing with great violence for two days it was by no means a comfortable journey”.
13 Ibid, 342–43.
the Roman way-station Gypsaria (known from the *Tabula Peutingeriana*); however, no Roman remains have been found at the site.\(^{14}\)

Next to describe Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was the Czech explorer Alois Musil, who visited the site in 1902. What is particularly striking about Musil’s account is his reference to reports of inscriptions (perhaps inspired by Palmer’s discoveries 32 years earlier),\(^{15}\) as well as a nearby watering hole fed by an underground stream.\(^{16}\) In addition, Musil reported that his visit sparked a hostile encounter with the local Bedouin, ostensibly on the grounds that Kunillet ‘Ajrud was a holy place (*heilige Ort*).\(^{17}\)

Following the Israeli occupation of the Sinai in 1967, the way was opened for Israeli archaeologists to explore the region. In 1967 Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was surveyed by Beno Rothenberg, who identified it as an 8\(^{\text{th}}\) century Iron Age fort.\(^{18}\) The site was surveyed again in 1970 by Ze’ev Meshel, who found Iron Age IIB remains, including four sherds with the letter ‘ālep.\(^{19}\) But it was not until 1975 that the first scientific excavations were conducted by a team, led by Meshel, from the University of Tel Aviv. The excavations were conducted over three short seasons in October 1975, December 1975 and May 1976. In the first season work was limited to the western building (Building A). In the second season attention shifted to include the eastern structure (Building B). In the third season work was completed on both buildings and the open space in between. Following the excavations Meshel concluded that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was a single period site that could be dated between the middle of the 9\(^{\text{th}}\) and the middle of the


\(^{15}\) Alois Musil, *Arabia Petraea II: Edom* (Vienna: 1908), 171, 173.

\(^{16}\) Ibid, 174.

\(^{17}\) Ibid, 174


\(^{19}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, XVII.
8th centuries B.C.E. With the exception of part of the southern half of the western storeroom, excavations were completed to floor level in all areas of Building A; however, it should be noted that the excavators only reported reaching bedrock in one locus, at the northern end of the western storeroom.

In 1978 the finds from Kuntillet 'Ajrud were displayed in the Israel Museum as part of a special exhibition. Many of the inscriptions remained on display there until 1994 when they were returned to Egypt along with other artefacts excavated in the Sinai. The current location of the inscriptions and artefacts is unknown.

4.3. THE ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS

The architectural remains consist of two buildings: Building A at the western end of the summit, and Building B approximately 13.5m to the east.

Building A

Building A, the better preserved of the two, appears to have been the main building. It is roughly rectangular, constructed around a central courtyard with four square rooms reminiscent of towers at each of its corners. Access to the building was attained via a bent-axis entrance at the eastern end of the courtyard. Comparable bent-axis entrances are known from the religious architecture of Mesopotamia, where they apparently served symbolically and functionally to separate the image of the deity from the

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21 Meshel, Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 48. I am indebted to Kyle Keimer for this observation.
outside world. However, there is no clear indication that a cult image was located inside Building A. Then again, the design of the bent-axis entrance at Kuntillet 'Ajrud is also reminiscent of the gate at the so-called “Aharoni Fortress”, approximately 10km north-west of Kadesh Barnea, and it is possible that it was primarily a defensive structure (see below).

Elongated chambers run along the southern and western walls of Building A. Storage vessels imbedded in the floor indicate that these were probably used as storerooms at the time the site was abandoned.

A bench-lined transverse room (the “bench-room”) flanked the entrance at the eastern end of the courtyard. This room was separated into

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25 Admittedly Zevit drew attention to two bench-shaped installations at the northern end of the courtyard, positing that these were related to the worship of two deities, but he was vague as to what precisely this would entail. Presumably he meant that the installations could have served as pedestals for a cult image, perhaps to be identified with the worked stones (maṣebot?) found in the north-western corner-room. This may be correct, but it is pure conjecture. Cf. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 379; cf. Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 43. For the interpretation of the worked stones see Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 66. Furthermore, evidence of animal dung excavated at floor-level suggests that the courtyard may have been used to pen animals, at least on occasion (although this conceivably have come from a period shortly after the site was abandoned); ibid, 31, 33. Is it likely that cult images would be erected in an area where they could easily be knocked down by the movement of the animals?

26 Cf. Ze’ev Meshel, “The ‘Aharoni Fortress’ near Quseima and the ‘Israelite Fortresses’ in the Negev”, *BASOR* 294 (1994): 42–47. Note, however, that gate complex at the “Aharoni Fortress” was constructed approximately 150–200 years before Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. In addition it should be noted that a piece of worked palm-wood was discovered at the eastern end of the courtyard at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, and Meshel suggested that this might have been part of a door socket. This interpretation is further supported by a burnt wooden beam in the south eastern door jamb, which might be a remnant of a wooden doorframe, suggesting that, at some stage, the entrance could be sealed from the inside; cf. Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 22, 322–23. Note that the location of the benches on the north-western doorjamb would have precluded a door in the inner entrance during Phase 3.

two wings by a central passageway, meaning that anyone entering Building A would have to pass between the wings of the bench-room. The walls and benches in this room were coated in white plaster, and it was here that several of the KAPT were found (see below).

Stairways in the south-eastern and south-western corners of the courtyard apparently admitted access to a second storey. Within a collapse at the western end of the courtyard the excavators discovered pieces of a loom, textiles, small vessels, and organic remains including grain, date and olive pits, and pomegranate peel, suggesting that the upper-storey might have been the main living area, where activities related to weaving and food consumption were conducted. It is also worth noting with Na’aman and Lissovsky that a lookout standing on the rooftop would have a commanding view of the surrounding area, making the site eminently defensible against local raiders (cf. the plaster drawing which depicts figures standing on the roof of a towered structure).

Building B

Building B is severely eroded and its plan is difficult to determine. It consists of two wings which frame the main entrance to the site. The northern wing of Building B includes a chamber with a pilastered entrance and plastered walls and floor. Most of the decorated plaster fragments (as opposed to inscribed plaster) with floral and geometric designs were discovered in this wing. The stone wall-bases of this structure run to only three or four courses, and it seems that, unlike Building A, the walls were

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28 In the opinion of the excavators, the quality and quantity of stones in the collapsed wall at the western end of the courtyard is consistent with a two-storey structure; Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 42.


made of mudbrick.\textsuperscript{31} The function of this building remains unclear. The southern wing of Building B is yet more difficult to interpret, but it too appears to have been plastered. The standout feature of this wing is a platform structure, constructed from a solid mass of stones rising approximately 70–80cm above the surface level, which the excavators interpreted as a possible \textit{bamah}. It appears that this structure was also plastered.\textsuperscript{32} To the south of this structure there appears to have been a second building that included a walled courtyard, the southern perimeter of which is entirely eroded.\textsuperscript{33} The only inscription discovered in Building B was \textit{Kajr2.7} ([…]\textit{לרא}). In addition, inscription \textit{Kajr2.6} ([\small\textit{Ｋ０４}]\textit{לשר}) was discovered in the open space between the two buildings.

\textbf{4.4. Kuntillet 'Ajrud in Diachronic Perspective}

Notwithstanding the apparently short occupancy of the site, there is evidence for at least three building phases. Nevertheless, due to the fact that Building A was constructed at the western extremity of the summit—causing its corner foundations to lie at different elevations—the excavators interpreted the first two phases as simply technical phases, writing: “[w]e assume that the builders of the site arrived in the area with a plan which was intended to fulfil a pre-defined aim. After finding the appropriate hill the plan was fitted to the size and shape of the summit, which dictated the dimensions of the buildings but not the basic plan”.\textsuperscript{34} This is plausible; however, the fact that the benches in the bench-room were constructed on top of two successive occupational levels (see below), suggests that there was a fundamental shift in the function and use of the settlement between the first and last phases.

\textsuperscript{31} Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)}, 53, for the drawing see 185 and figs.6.30 and 6.31.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 57.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 58.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 11, 15.
4.4.1 Phase 1

The first phase (fig.4.1) can be recognised most clearly in the bench-room of Building A. In Phase 1 the distinctive benches were not yet built and the floors extended to the walls. There is no indication that the room had a special function at this stage.\(^\text{35}\) During this phase there was direct access between the northern and southern wings of the bench-room and the two corner-rooms; however, the corner-rooms were later partially blocked by the Phase 3 benches (see below), suggesting a fundamental change in the use of the rooms.\(^\text{36}\) The design of the room is otherwise indistinguishable from the southern and western storerooms, and it seems reasonable to assume that in Phase 1 the bench-room, too, was simply used for storage.

In the south-western corner of the courtyard, adjacent to the western stairway, the excavators unearthed a food preparation area. This was dubbed the “western kitchen”. The function of this space was indicated by three tabuns, occurring at different elevations. At least two of these should be identified with Phase 1 (see below).

During this initial phase the walls of Building A were coated with a crude grey plaster made of mud and straw.\(^\text{37}\) The characteristic white plaster was not applied in the bench-room until Phase 3, and while it is possible that the whitened surfaces at the western end of the courtyard and in Building B were applied in Phase 1, it is likely that all of the plastered surfaces were contemporary. There is, therefore, no evidence that wall inscriptions or painted decorations were associated with this phase.

There are signs that the site was partially destroyed sometime prior to the construction of Phase 2: at the eastern end of the southern storeroom the excavators unearthed what appeared to be a ramp formed with

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\(^{35}\) Note that fragments of a possible tabun were found in the southern wing of this room; Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 24.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, 24, 26, 28.

\(^{37}\) Cf. ibid, 24, 26, 28.
compacted debris from a wall collapse, and at the southern end of the courtyard there were indications of a probable roof collapse, which covered the two lower tabuns in the western kitchen. Given the dates proposed above, it is tempting to associate this collapse with the earthquake in ca.760 B.C.E. (see above), but there is no evidence to support this.

4.4.2. Phase 2

There may have been a short occupation gap after Phase 1, but there is no proof of this. Evidence for Phase 2 occurs only in the northern and southern wings of the bench-room, where the Phase 1 floor was covered by a layer of fill, and a second floor (also abutting the walls) was laid over the top. In light of the fact that the fill only covered the floor of the bench-room, not the corner-rooms, the excavators have interpreted this as merely a technical phase, meant to strengthen the Phase 3 floors and benches.

4.4.3. Phase 3

Once again, the clearest evidence for Phase 3 (fig.4.2) comes from the bench-room. In this phase the benches were constructed along the walls, partially blocking the openings leading into the corner-rooms. It was at this time that the floor and walls of the entrance and bench-room were coated in white plaster. The finds in the corner-rooms consisted primarily of small vessels (flasks and small jugs), bowls, organic remains (including date and olive pits), and several cooking pots (in the southern corner-

38 Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 51.
39 Ibid, 37.
40 Cf. ibid, 24, 26.
41 Ibid, 26.
The unusual nature of these finds, especially in the north-eastern corner-room, led the excavators to speculate that the rooms might have been used as *favissae* for vessels deposited as offerings in the bench-room (although see §4.5). That may be so, but it should be noted that the corner-rooms—and, for that matter, the site as a whole—were devoid of the sorts of artefacts (e.g. altars, incense burners, etc.) that are typically used to determine the nature of religious architecture. This should encourage a considerable degree of caution when ascribing a religious function to the space (see below).

During this phase a second kitchen was constructed in the south-eastern corner of the courtyard. The majority of the faunal remains were located around this kitchen, which might indicate that it served as the primary food preparation area during Phase 3; however, none of the skeletal remains showed damage resulting from butchery or burning.

It is not entirely clear to which phase Building B should be attributed; however, there is evidence that some sort of activity was conducted in the area prior to its construction. Whatever the case, the use of white plaster in both the entrance complex of Building A and the surfaces of Building B, suggests (at least) a conceptual relationship between the two buildings during Phase 3.

4.4.4. The abandonment of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud

It is not immediately clear why Kuntillet 'Ajrud was abandoned. There is evidence that at some stage the buildings were partially destroyed for a

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43 Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 26, 30. Given that there was apparently direct access to the corner-rooms during Phase 1, it is reasonable to infer that these finds were deposited after the entrances were blocked.
44 Ibid, 30, 243, 271, n.8; cf. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 160.
45 Cf. already the comments of Meshel, “Notes and News”, 53; Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 68.
second time, possibly by an earthquake.\textsuperscript{48} It is not known whether this occurred before or after the abandonment of the site, although it should be noted that a layer of ash was discovered beneath a debris layer in the entrance to Building A, which might suggest that fire played some part in the destruction.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, Ayalon has suggested that the concentration of certain vessel types in particular parts of the complex (esp. bowls and lamps near the entrance, and accumulations of storage vessels blocking the doorways of the store-rooms) might attest the hasty desertion of the site; although, why this should be characterised as “hasty” is not immediately clear.\textsuperscript{50} As Meshel noted, other possible explanations for the abandonment of the site include the drying of the wells after a period of drought (cf. Palmer’s report cited above); the cessation of provisioning; or a royal directive.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{48} In part this is based on the fact that the walls in the southern storeroom toppled in opposite directions; i.e. the southern wall appears to have collapsed southward down the slope, while the northern wall fell northward into the courtyard; Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet `Ajrud (Horvat Teman)}, 37, 48, 66. However, as the southern wall was at lower elevation, this might have simply been due to the work gravity after the roof had deteriorated.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 22–24.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 243.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid, 66.
One of the most enigmatic and compelling features of the architecture at both Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Deir 'Alla is the benches framing the rooms in which the plaster texts were found. Benches associated with religious architecture are known elsewhere in the southern Levant (e.g. Tel Arad, Tell Qasile, Jerusalem Cave 1; and the Lachish cult room), where they
apparently served as a place to leave offerings and dedications.\textsuperscript{52} Comparable benches are also known from cult corners in domestic contexts.\textsuperscript{53} This has been taken by some support the view that the bench-rooms at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Deir 'Alla were designed to accommodate ritual or cultic activities. However, at these other sites, the cultic function of the benches was indicated by the associated finds (e.g. altars, incense burners, etc.). But this is not the case at Kuntillet 'Ajrud or Deir 'Alla. Granted, a number the finds recovered in the vicinity of the bench-room at Kuntillet 'Ajrud were extraordinary. In particular, the excavators emphasised the unusual accumulation of small vessels in the north-eastern corner-room (see above).\textsuperscript{54} Meanwhile, Liora Horwitz, et al., have noted the presence of several aquatic species (i.e. shells and fish bones) in the vicinity of the bench-room. Several of these are known to have been traded in the Levant during the Iron Age. This led them to suggest that the aquatic remains represent trade-items deposited in the bench-room as offerings.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{54} This lead the excavators to suggest that the room was used as a \textit{favissa} for vessels from the bench-room; Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman)}, 30. Note, however, that the vessels could conceivably be connected to eating and drinking, and do not necessarily entail a cultic association; cf. ibid, 241, fig.7.30.

\textsuperscript{55} However, they observed that no terrestrial animals were found in the bench-room; ibid, 333.
However, their interpretation is weakened by the fact that the remains are not restricted to the bench-room, but are dispersed throughout the southern and eastern parts of the courtyard. Perhaps more significant is the fact that two of the engraved stone bowls (Kajr1.1, 1.4) were located in the north-eastern corner-room; however, it should be noted that the third was discovered in the north-western corner of the courtyard (see fig.2.1). Finally, as was discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of the fragments from Pithos A—which may or may not have had a dedicatory function (cf. §2.4.1)—were discovered on the eastern bench in the northern wing of the bench-room; however, Pithos B together with a sherd from Pithos A were discovered in the courtyard, separated from the bench-room by a wall. Thus, while it is possible that the artefacts associated with the bench-room at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud reflect a cultic or ritual function, this is by no means assured.

At Deir ‘Alla the case is starker. There, the bench-room was almost entirely devoid of artefacts (see §7.6.2). This is all the more significant given that the room was apparently destroyed by an earthquake, meaning we should expect signs of the activities conducted in the room at the time of destruction to be preserved.

An alternative possibility was proposed by André Lemaire, who, taking the abecedaries and other inscriptions at both sites as evidence for scribal education, argued that the bench-rooms at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Deir ‘Alla might have served as a classroom. However, while Lemaire is

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56 Only the single Glycymeris insubrica shell fragment was associated exclusively with the northern corner-room; Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Ḥorvat Teman), 331.
57 Again we should note Zevit’s suggestion that the bench-shaped installations at the northern end of the courtyard may have been related to the worship of two deities at the site (cf. fn.25, above). Zevit noted that Pithos B was discovered near the easternmost of these installations, which might reflect an association between the two; but this is conjecture; cf. Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel, 379, and n.45.
probably correct that educational activities were conducted at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (cf. §2.4.1.2), his attempt to interpret the bench-room as a classroom is less convincing—as Hadley has countered, the tight confines of the room are not well suited to this purpose.\(^{59}\) Nevertheless, the classroom hypothesis was recently revived with regard to Deir 'Alla by Erhard Blum (cf. §5.1.1.1).\(^{60}\) In this case Lemaire and Blum may be correct, but it is an inference based primarily on the assumed suitability of the room and the (ambiguous) nature of the inscribed material, and remains unsubstantiated.\(^{61}\)

But the explanation for the bench-rooms may in fact be more mundane. John Holladay has highlighted the fact that the design of the transverse room at Kuntillet 'Ajrud resembles the chambered gate complex at the fortress at Arad.\(^{62}\) This comparison is particularly compelling with regard to Phase 1, for which there is no reason to believe that the room had a special function. However, Holladay was also able to cite parallels for the benches in the gate complexes at Gezer, Tel Dan, Tell en-Nasbeh, and

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\(^{60}\) Blum, “Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir 'Alla”, 597–98.

\(^{61}\) Note that with the exception of a (probable) partial abecedary (cf. §5.2.3), Deir 'Alla had nothing comparable to the (probable) drafts and exercises found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.

Khirbet el-Qom. At these sites the benches had no apparent cultic function, and may have been nothing more than a place to sit and conduct business; hence it is entirely plausible that the function of the bench-room at Kuntillet ʿAjrud was related simply to the daily life of the community, perhaps furnishing a shaded place to sit in relative comfort (see further below).

Indeed, the design of the north-eastern bench might provide indirect support for the possibility that the benches were primarily intended as seating. This bench was constructed at a higher elevation than the corresponding bench on the western wall, and was fitted with a small ledge running along its base—a similar arrangement occurs in the north-western corner of the southern wing. It is conceivable that this ledge was intended as an additional shelf to deposit small offerings, but, in view of the height of the bench, it is ideally suited for use as a “footrest”. This does not exclude the possibility that the benches served a dual purpose, but there is little evidence to support this.

Ultimately, the architectural remains could be consistent with either cultic or secular functions. In order to determine which, it is necessary to consider their relationship to the plaster texts in closer detail. Consequently, I will defer judgement until discussion of the KAPT and DAPT.

4.6. The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud

Early $^{14}$C analyses indicated that the site was probably built at the end of the 9th century or beginning of the 8th. However, Lily Singer-Avitz and

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64 In this regard, it is interesting to note that the bench in the northern part of the bench-room was raised some 20cm above the level of the other benches, creating a kind of platform in front of the window leading into the corner-room. Was this an offering niche? Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Horvat Teman), 26–28.
Edward Lipiński have questioned the reliability of the \( ^{14} \text{C} \) dates, noting the high ratio of long-lasting wooden samples—which, given the dry climate, might already have been quite old before they were used in the construction—rather than samples taken from short-lived materials such as fruit or reeds.\(^{65}\) Nevertheless, using a new quantitative method that attempted to account for the potential skewing of the data, Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piazetksy subsequently defended and further refined the \( ^{14} \text{C} \) dates, arguing that the site was probably founded between 820 and 795 B.C.E.\(^{66}\) However, the calibrated results allow a range between 754–544 B.C.E. for the abandonment of Kuntillet ʿAjrud.\(^{67}\) Notwithstanding this range, a clustering of dates in the second half of the 8th century led Finkelstein and Piazetksy to suggest a *terminus post quem* for the abandonment of the site sometime after 745 B.C.E.\(^{68}\) In order to further refine the dates it is necessary to turn to typological and historical arguments.

Owing to the contestable nature of the \( ^{14} \text{C} \) results, Singer-Avitz turned to the ceramic assemblage. But the interpretation of the ceramics

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\(^{67}\) Singer-Avitz “The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud: A Rejoinder”, 115.

\(^{68}\) Cf. Finkelstein and Piazetksy, “The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud: The \(^{14} \text{C} \) Perspective”, 178.
has proved no less contentious.\textsuperscript{69} The initial typological analysis of the pottery was completed by Etan Ayalon for his 1985 M.A. thesis at Tel Aviv University, and published in 1995 in the journal \textit{Tel Aviv}.\textsuperscript{70} In these studies, Ayalon concluded that “the ceramic assemblage of ’Ajrud must be dated to the time span between the end of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century to the beginning of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century B.C.E.”.\textsuperscript{71} This conclusion was subsequently endorsed by Liora Freud.\textsuperscript{72} However, Singer-Avitz has challenged this assessment, arguing that the ceramic assemblage should be compared to the Lachish III pottery and dated (along with Arad X–VIII and Beersheba III–II) to the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{73} I will leave the intricacies of typological analysis to those better equipped to deal with them, but a methodological observation is in order.

The identification of the Kuntillet ’Ajrud assemblage with the Lachish III horizon is not, in itself, controversial; where the difficulty lies is in determining the temporal relationship with that horizon.\textsuperscript{74} As Singer-Avitz has eloquently argued, ceramic typologies are most useful for


\textsuperscript{70} Ayalon, “The Iron Age II Pottery Assemblage from Ḥurbat Teiman”; idem, “The Iron Age II Pottery Assemblage from Ḥorvat Teiman”, 141-205; Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman)}, 245–46.

\textsuperscript{71} Ayalon, “The Iron Age II Pottery Assemblage from ḤorvatTeiman”, 198.

\textsuperscript{72} Freud, “The Date of Kuntillet ’Ajrud: A Reply to Lily Singer-Avitz”, 172.

\textsuperscript{73} Singer-Avitz, “The Date of Kuntillet ’Ajrud”, 209–12; idem, “The Date of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud: A Rejoinder”, 110–14. Ayalon had originally determined that the Kuntillet ’Ajrud assemblage was typologically earlier than Lachish III; Ayalon, “The Iron Age II Pottery Assemblage from Ḥorvat Teiman”, 197.

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. Finkelstein and Piazetzky, “The Date of Kuntillet ’Ajrud: The $^{14}$C Perspective”, 183.
determining the final period before the end of a stratum. In effect, this means that there is a gap in our knowledge about the development of ceramic types between the end of Lachish IV and the end of Lachish III. Assuming it is correct to equate the destruction of Lachish IV and Arad stratum XI with the earthquake in the days of Uzziah (cf. Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5), then it should be possible to establish a *terminus post quem* ca. 760 B.C.E. for the beginning of Phase 3 at Kuntillet `Ajrud. However, this leaves open the question of the abandonment of the site. To resolve this Singer-Avitz turned to the provenance of the ceramic types, emphasising the fact that a combination of petrographic, neutron activation, and typological analyses of the Kuntillet `Ajrud pottery indicated a preponderance of vessels from Philistia and Judea, with comparatively few vessels from the northern regions around Israel and the Pheonician coast.

According to Singer-Avitz this basic pattern is replicated in the Beersheba III repertoire (which can be equated with Lachish III and Arad strata X–VIII). Furthermore, she noted that there is a marked change in the ceramic assemblages of Beersheba III and II, observing that in these strata all vessels of northern (i.e. Phoenician, Israelite) provenance are associated *only* with Stratum II, while *none* are found in Stratum III. She attributed this disparity to the reinstitution of Phoenician trade networks in Philistia and Egypt during the reign of Sargon II. Given that vessels of northern provenance are also present at Kuntillet `Ajrud, Singer-Avitz argued that it

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79 Singer-Avitz, “A Group of Phoenician Vessels from Tel Beersheba”, 196.
too should be associated with the economic developments of the late 8th century. But this conclusion rests on the assumption that a single historical explanation must pertain in both cases. In the absence of other data this assumption would not be unreasonable, but Singer-Avitz has overlooked the compelling linguistic evidence for (northern) Israelite presence at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (see §3.5), basing her typological conclusions solely on the limited number of northern vessels. For historical reasons that will be discussed below, the cumulative evidence at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is better suited to the reign of Jeroboam II in the mid-8th century, when it seems that the northern kingdom of Israel was in a position of comparative strength in the South. More importantly, however, the reference to YHWH of Samaria in Kajr3.1 (a transcription of a letter that appears to name a royal confidant, רבים וּרְעָה) militates against a date long after the destruction of the northern capital in 720 B.C.E.

If Beersheba II is not used to anchor Kuntillet ‘Ajrud to the late 8th century, then the ceramic assemblage at ‘Ajrud could be attributed anywhere within the Lachish III horizon. Moreover, within this horizon it should not be surprising to find that the ceramic assemblage was typologically advanced (i.e. with few older types intermingled). This is precisely what we would expect at a site of short duration that was actively provisioned from outside, since, in such cases, there would be little need or opportunity to reuse older vessels. As such, there is no reason to presume a date at the end of the Lachish III period.

In short, the 14C and ceramic evidence is consistent with the possibility that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was abandoned sometime before the last two decades of the 8th century. This is further supported by the

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palaeography of the pithoi and stone vessels, which shows affinities to the script of the Samaria Ostraca.  

4.7. **Kuntillet ’Ajrud in Historical Perspective**

On the basis of its southern location and the suspicion of Phoenician influence in the script and iconography, Meshel initially conjectured that Kuntillet ’Ajrud was a Judean site dating from the time of Jehoshaphat or Queen Athaliah in the 9th century B.C.E. However, Lemaire subsequently argued that the date should be lowered to the 8th century on palaeographic grounds. He then turned to historical considerations in order to account for the preponderance of northern theophoric PNN (cf. §3.4). Lemaire reasoned that it is unlikely that an Israelite settlement would have been established in the remote south during the period of political turmoil in the second half of the 8th century, and certainly not after the campaigns of Tiglath-Pileser III in 734/2. On the other hand, he argued that it was equally unlikely that the site would have been founded during the period of Aramean dominance at the end of the 9th century. This leaves only a short window in the first half of the 8th century. Accordingly, Lemaire concluded that Kuntillet ’Ajrud was probably founded in the brief period of Israelite economic recovery, during the reign of Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.E.; cf. the notice in 2 Kgs 14:25).

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82 Meshel, “Notes and News”, 53.


84 For the palaeographical discussion see ibid, 134–36.

85 Ibid, 137–38. Although, cf. Nadav Na’aman, “Azariah of Judah and Jereboam II of Israel”, *VT* 43 (1993): 227–34, who argued that there was a Judean resurgence under Azariah, which restored control of the lucrative trade routes by the way of the Arabah, forcing the Israelites to use the less convenient *Darb el-Ghazzeh* (see below).
of Amaziah’s war with Edom (2 Kgs 14:7) at face value, then Kuntillet ʿAjrud could be associated with territory recently wrested from Edom, and then usurped by Israel in the wake of Amaziah’s disastrous northern campaign (2 Kgs 14:8–14).\footnote{Cf. Lipiński, who argued that Judah’s territorial advances might have been more modest than is typically assumed, arguing that רֵאֵז mentioned in 2 Kgs 14:22 should be identified with Ramath al-Ḥallil, 3km north of Hebron, rather than Tel el-Khaleifeh; Lipiński, On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age, 383.} If so, then the political situation might have been comparatively volatile (see below).

Lemaire’s historical reconstruction has received widespread support, but it is not universally accepted. As noted above, the uncertainty surrounding the \(^{14}\text{C}\) results led Singer-Avitz and Lipiński to re-examine the provenance of the ceramic assemblage. Both stressed the preponderance of vessels from Philistia and Judea, rather than the northern regions of Israel and Phoenicia.\footnote{Singer-Avitz, “The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 209; Lipiński, On the Skirts of Canaan, 376–78; Meshel, Kuntillet ʿAjrud (ECTOR), 243–45, 275–76, 279–87; Gunneweg, Perlman, and Meshel, “The Origin of the Pottery of Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 270–83.} This led Singer-Avitz to argue—based primarily on her comparison with the pottery from Beersheba—that the Kuntillet ʿAjrud pottery assemblage should be ascribed to the cultural and economic system of late 8\(^{th}\) century Judah.\footnote{Singer-Avitz, “The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 197–213; idem, “The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud: A Rejoinder”, 116; cf. Nadav Naʿaman, “An Assyrian Residence at Ramat Rāḥel?” TA 28 (2001): 260–80, esp. 267–70.} In particular, she sought to identify the historical context of the site with the Iron IIB fortifications at Kadesh Barnea and Tell el-Kheleifeh, which she maintained (following Naʿaman) were constructed as part of an Assyrian strategy to control the peripheral regions of the empire.\footnote{Ibid, 197–213; idem, “The Date of Kuntillet ʿAjrud: A Rejoinder”, 116; cf. Nadav Naʿaman, “An Assyrian Residence at Ramat Rāḥel?” TA 28 (2001): 260–80, esp. 267–70.} Lipiński was also drawn to the period of Assyrian imperial expansion in the South. To support his case, Lipiński placed considerable emphasis on Lemaire’s palaeographic analysis, stressing his comparison between the cursive tick on several yōds at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (cf. §3.6) and
the cursive tick on the yōds in Arad ostracon 72.\textsuperscript{90} Ignoring Lemaire’s proposed dating of the script at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (ca. 800–734), Lipiński fixated on Lemaire’s suggestion that Arad ostracon 72 should be connected with Arad stratum IX, which he argued must be later than Lachish IV (= Arad XI). He attributed the destruction of Lachish IV to Sennacherib’s attack at the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century,\textsuperscript{91} and, by extension, Lipiński concluded that Kuntillet 'Ajrud “can hardly precede the last quarter of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century”.\textsuperscript{92} However, it can be countered that the cursive tick, which is the centrepiece of Lipiński’s dating, also finds clear parallels in several of the Samaria ostraca (e.g. 6:2–4; 9:1–3; 16:3).\textsuperscript{93} And at the very least we may affirm that there is a deliberate and pronounced tick on the yōd in line 3 of the Barley Ostracon from Samaria, which must predate the Assyrian destruction ca.722 B.C.E. That being so, Lipiński’s only obstacle to an earlier date is removed. In fact, as aside, may be noted there is a considerable similarity between the script of Kajr 3.6 and that of the

\textsuperscript{90} Lemaire, “Date et origine des inscriptions hébraïques et phéniciens de Kuntillet 'Ajrud”, 136; Lipiński, On the Skirts of Canaan, 374.

\textsuperscript{91} In this he was following an earlier observation by Kathleen Kenyon, “[it] could be that the destruction recorded by Ussishkin as ending Level IV but without evidence of burning is really that of the Assyrian attack”; Kathleen M. Kenyon, Archaeology in the Holy Land, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed., (London: E. Benn, 1979), 297; cf. Lipiński, On the Skirts of Canaan, 374. Of course, the date of the end of Lachish IV is not assured, but many would place the transition from Lachish IV to Lachish III in the middle of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, perhaps associated with Amos’ earthquake, rather than the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century; for a recent discussion, see Kyle H. Keimer, “The Socioeconomic Impact of Hezekiah’s Preparations for Rebellion” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2011), 36–42.

\textsuperscript{92} Lipiński, On the Skirts of Canaan, 374–75.

\textsuperscript{93} See also the newly published inscribed fragment in Anat Mendel and Leore Grosman, “Unpublished Hebrew and Other Northwest Semitic Inscriptions from Samaria Studies with a 3-Dimensional Imaging Technology”, Mainz International Colloquium on Ancient Hebrew (Johannes-Gutenberg Universität, Mainz, 2011): 171–88. Note that Lemaire had already compared the script at Kuntillet 'Ajrud to the Samaria Ostraca, specifically proposing a date in the first three quarters of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century; this too was overlooked by Lipiński; c.f Lemaire, “Date et origine des inscriptions hébraïques et phéniciens de Kuntillet 'Ajrud”, 135.
Barley Ostracon, which might suggest that the site was still occupied and maintained contacts with the Northern Kingdom in the second half of the 8th century.\(^{94}\)

Having lowered the date to the end of the 8th century, and citing the presence of Pheonician inscriptions on the walls (by which he meant inscriptions in Phoenician script), Lipiński claimed that the administration of the site was probably in the hands of Pheonician attendants from the newly-established Assyro-Phoenician trading centre at Abu Ruqeish.\(^{95}\) However, the orthography of the plaster inscriptions (specifically the unreduced diphthong; cf. §3.2.3) militates against this possibility.\(^{96}\)

Ultimately, however, neither Singer-Avitz nor Lipiński payed sufficient attention to the preponderance of northern Israelite theophoric names (cf. §3.4), or the reference to YHWH of Samaria (\textit{Kajr}3.1; cf. \textit{Kajr}3.8) at Kuntillet ʿAjrud. While it is possible that these signs of northern contact might reflect the presence of refugees from the north following the destruction of the northern capital in the last decades of the 8th century—as Singer-Avitz suggested with regard to the northern ceramics—the complete absence of southern theophoric names tips the balance in favour of a direct association with the Northern Kingdom. Consequently we are left with a seeming paradox: on the one hand the ceramic assemblage suggests southern affiliation; on the other hand the onomastic and epigraphic evidence suggests northern affiliation. How, then, are we to explain the high ratio of vessels from Jerusalem and Philistia?

It is conceivable that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was initially founded under the aegis of the kingdom of Judah following the Edomite wars (2 Kgs 14:7)—

\(^{94}\) Compare, for example, the elongated yôd (although, less dramatic in \textit{Kajr}3.6) with a pronounced cursive tick; elongated and curved mêm; the tendency for the top bar of the hê to extend beyond the shaft; elongated lamed and the virtually identical kâps.


\(^{96}\) This datum was available to Lipiński, and, as such, given his linguistic credentials, Lipiński’s disregard of the diphthongal evidence is surprising.
at which time the Judahite and Philistian vessels were deposited—but was later taken over by a group of northerners who inscribed the vessels.\textsuperscript{97} But, as was discussed in Chapter 3, the references to YHWH of the Teman in \textit{Kajr}3.6, 3.9 and 4.1 rather testifies to the essential continuity of the site.

Another possibility is that the vessels were tribute exacted from the kingdom of Judah. It appears that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was provisioned entirely from outside.\textsuperscript{98} In addition to the epigraphic evidence discussed in Chapter 2 (§2.3, §2.4.5), Ayalon observed that no sickle blades or granaries, and only three grinding stones were discovered at the site—despite the fact that areas at the foot of the hill were tillable, and are cultivated today by local Bedouin.\textsuperscript{99} An external supply chain is also indicated by the large number of storage vessels, and (possibly) by the faunal remains, which included a high ratio of imported fish.\textsuperscript{100} This is consistent with the historical reconstruction outlined by Lemaire. Following Joash’s victory over Amaziah in the final years of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century (2 Kgs 14:8–14), it is reasonable to conjecture that the Israelite kings may have exacted tribute from the conquered kingdom of Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 14:14). It possible that the Judahite vessels at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud may have formed part of this levy.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{97} In that case, the evidence for diphthong retention in the KAPT might suggest that the wall inscriptions were written during a time of Judahite occupancy; but as has already been argued, this is not necessary to explain the orthography.

\textsuperscript{98} This is consistent with the interpretation of the vessels marked יג and כ, \textit{Kajr}2.9–11 and \textit{Kajr}2.12–23 respectively (cf. §2.3). Compare Zevit’s discussion of an internal shipping system in Judah in the 7\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} centuries B.C.E.; Zevit, \textit{The Religions of Ancient Israel}, 379–80.

\textsuperscript{99} Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)}, 271, 356.

\textsuperscript{100} Liora Horwitz, et al. also drew attention to the absence of medium to large sized hunted taxa, which would be expected if the site was self-sufficient; Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)}, 336. Furthermore, they observed that the desert region would not have been able to support more than a modest flock of sheep or goats on a permanent basis.

\textsuperscript{101} The same inference was drawn by Nadav Na’aman, “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud”, 313.
Following this argument further, it is reasonable to conjecture that the situation was unlikely to have long endured the political turmoil following the death of Jeroboam II (2 Kgs 15:1–30). Perhaps in this period of decline, the economic burden of provisioning Kuntillet 'Ajrud was too great and the site was simply abandoned.  

4.8. THE FUNCTION OF KUNITLET 'AJRUD

There are almost as many theories relating to the nature and function of the site as there are scholars who have written about it. Broadly speaking, opinions can be divided into two groups: those who prefer a primarily cultic association, and those who prefer a primarily economic association. In reality there are few who would see these as mutually exclusive alternatives. The following discussion does not attempt to be exhaustive, but only considers the most prominent positions.

Already in 1977 Meshel had written that, despite its appearance, Kuntillet 'Ajrud was unlike other Negev fortresses in terms of its plan and the variety and nature of its finds. This led him to speculate that the site may have been a religious centre at which travellers prayed for safety and the success of their venture. He also suggested that the site might have been a border shrine demarcating the end of the territory of Judah; although he later came to identify the site with the northern kingdom of Israel. However, noting that cultic objects (such as altars and incense burners) were conspicuously absent from the finds at Kuntillet 'Ajrud,

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102 Cf. Keimer, “The Socioeconomic Impact of Hezekiah’s Preparations for Rebellion”, 100, n.84.
103 Meshel, “Notes and News”, 53.
104 Ibid, 53.
Meshel was forced to concede that activities, such as burning incense, pouring libations, and offering sacrifices, were not conducted at the site.\textsuperscript{106}

More recently, on the basis of the textile remains, Meshel and others have suggested that Kuntillet 'Ajrud was inhabited by a community of priests who offered religious services and blessings to desert travellers and caravan drivers.\textsuperscript{107} Among the most extraordinary finds at Kuntillet 'Ajrud were large quantities of textiles (more than 120 fragments), mainly comprising linen. In the Hebrew Bible, linen is frequently associated with the priestly vestments (e.g. Exod 28:15, 39, 42; Lev 6:10; 16:4; 1 Sam 22:18; 2 Chron 5:12; Ezek 44:17–18), and, as such, the high ratio of linen to wool may indicate that the site was inhabited by a contingent of priests and Levites.\textsuperscript{108} Yet more important, however, are three fragments (one of them dyed red and blue) that combine both wool and linen. The wearing of such mixed fabrics (ša'atnez) is expressly prohibited in Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:11; however, it has been argued that the coloured vestments of the High Priest, described in Exod 28, were made of just such a linen-wool blend (cf. Exod 28:5).\textsuperscript{109} Hence, it seems that the biblical proscriptions were intended to restrict such fabrics for the use of officiating priests.\textsuperscript{110} This is further supported by Second Temple sources (Josephus, A.J. 4.208;

\textsuperscript{106} Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 68.


\textsuperscript{108} Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 302, 310, n.29. As Susan Ackerman observed, the high ratio of linen to wool is particularly suggestive in light of the distance of the site from the flax producing regions in Israel to the north or in Egypt to the west, compared to the proximity of sheep-herding regions in the Negev; Ackerman, “Asherah, the West Semitic Goddess of Spinning and Weaving?”, 27.

\textsuperscript{109} Menahem Haran, Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 160–62; as Haran observed, the qualification הַקְּדַשְׁתָּם, “lest it become holy”, appended to the related prohibition against sowing mixed crops in Deut 22:9, supports the view that such mixtures were sacrosanct. Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 307–08, 309, n.14.

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel, 376.
This is not conclusive, as the ša’aṭnez and fine linen could be trade items (cf. Hadley, below), and, in any case, it is not self-evident that the biblical proscriptions can be applied to the community at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, the priestly hypothesis tallies well with other circumstantial evidence.

A religious interpretation was also favoured by Nadav Na’aman and Nurit Lissovsky, who hypothesised that there might have been a sacred tree or grove in the vicinity associated with the cult of Asherah, and that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was a cultic site where food offerings were presented to the goddess. According to Na’aman and Lissovsky Building A was used to store the dedications to the goddess and other sancta, and served a secondary function as a hostel for passing traders. However, as Na’aman and Lissovsky readily admit, this conjecture is impossible to verify.

Susan Ackerman was similarly inclined to view the settlement as a religious site devoted to the worship of Asherah. Drawing on a range of biblical and archaeological data, she argued that one of the major religious activities conducted at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud probably involved spinning and weaving of textiles for Asherah (2 Kgs 23:7). This interpretation is not sufficient, in itself, to account for the origins of the site, but it does go some way toward explaining the extraordinary nature of the textile remains and the possible references to Asherah. However, caution is advisable, since, as was discussed in §2.4.1.1, there is reason to question whether Asherah should be afforded such a prominent role at the site.

Yet another possibility was proposed by Finkelstein, who argued that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was established as a local shrine by Arab traders along the

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112 Ibid, 190.
113 Ackerman, “Asherah, the West Semitic Goddess of Spinning and Weaving?”, 26–29.
114 Of course, allowance should be made accidents of preservation. The quantity of fabrics alone is, therefore, not decisive, nor, for that matter, is the presence of ša’aṭnez fabrics, since few textile remains are preserved from this period and we cannot know what was normal. The same is true of the possible references to Asherah.
Darb el-Ghazzeh. According to Finkelstein, the phenomenon of an isolated caravan cult place is paralleled at the later Negevite shrine at Ḥorvat Qīṭmīt (7th–early 6th centuries B.C.E.). In Finkelstein’s view, the poor architectural remains and eclectic pottery repertoire at Ḥorvat Qīṭmīt indicates that the shrine was not a state sanctioned enterprise, but a popular cult place established by the caravaneers who plied the trade routes that ran through the Beersheba Valley in the Neo-Assyrian period.

It is true that Ḥorvat Qīṭmīt and Kuntillet ʿAjrud resemble one another in several important regards: both were established in an isolated location; both were constructed in close proximity to known trade routes; and both had a heterogeneous ceramic assemblage, representing a broad cross-section of wares from throughout the region. In addition, Ḥorvat Qīṭmīt also yielded several short inscriptions, carved into the sides of vessels, which are best understood as votive offerings (cf. the engraved stone bowls from Kuntillet ʿAjrud, §2.2). But, the two sites differ in one important regard: at Ḥorvat Qīṭmīt a cultic function was indicated by large quantities of special finds, including human and animal figurines, a fragment of a small altar, and elaborately shaped chalices; yet, as has already been noted, such objects were conspicuously absent at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.

A popular alternative view is that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was an ancient caravanserai, or way station, for the use of passing traders and travellers. Such lodging places (מלון) are known from the Hebrew Bible; cf. Gen 42:27; 43:21; Exod 4:24; Josh 4:3, 8; 2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 10:29; Jer 9:2 (Heb. 1). This position was endorsed most strongly by Judith Hadley, who, due

116 For the Horvat Qitmit archaeological report, see Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, Horvat Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, Tel Aviv University, 1995).
119 For the finds at Ḥorvat Qīṭmīt see Beit-Arieh, Horvat Qīṭmīt.
in large part to the absence of cultic objects, rejected the possibility that
the site functioned primarily as a shrine.\textsuperscript{120} For Hadley, the structures
(including the bench-room) were reminiscent of secular rather than
religious architecture (cf. the plan of the fortress at Kadesh Barnea).\textsuperscript{121}
Hadley was also sceptical of the inference that the linen and šaʿatnez
fragments indicate a priestly presence, noting that these might easily be
explained as trade items left by passing merchants.\textsuperscript{122} Haldey’s analysis is
thorough, and she is correct to draw attention to the absence of cultic
paraphernalia; however, her discussion makes no allowance for the large
limestone basin (\textit{Kajr1.2}). Minimally, the difficulty involved in
transporting this massive object to the site suggests that Kuntillet ʿAjrud
had some special religious association beyond that of a simple
caravanserai.\textsuperscript{123}

Nevertheless, it is worth considering the caravanserai hypothesis
further. In a study drawing on a combination of archaeological and
ethnographic evidence ranging from Iron Age Israel to the Ottoman
Empire, Yifat Thareani-Susseley attempted developed a system of criteria

\textsuperscript{120} Hadley, \textit{The Cult of Asherah}, 106–20. A slightly different view was adopted by André
Lemaire, who described the site as “probalemment une sorte de khan”, and interpreted
Kuntillet ʿAjrud as a joint Phoenician-Israelite commercial venture related to the Red Sea
trade; Lemaire, \textit{Les écoles et la formation del a Bible dans l’ancien Israel}, 25; idem,
Lemaire, “Date et origine des inscriptions hébraïques et phéniciens de Kuntillet ʿAjrud”,
137–39.

\textsuperscript{121} Hadley, \textit{The Cult of Asherah}, 110. Cf. Holladay, “Religion of Israel and Judah Under
the Monarchy”, 259; Dever, \textit{Did God Have a Wife?}, 160; idem, \textit{The Lives of Ordinary
People in Israel}, 94–95; and Gösta W. Ahlström, \textit{Royal Administration and National
Religion in Ancient Palestine} (Leiden: E. J.Brill, 1982), 42–43.

\textsuperscript{122} Hadley, \textit{The Cult of Asherah}, 112. On linen as a valued commodity cf. Judg 14:12–13;
Prov 7:16.

\textsuperscript{123} See §2.2.1, n.6.
for the identification of ancient caravanserais. The list comprises of four features of primary importance and four features of secondary importance:

Primary features:
1. Proximity to trade route
2. Separation from local population
3. Existence of sleeping accommodation
4. Food preparation and consumption areas

Secondary features:
5. Animal holding pens
6. Security post or fortresses
7. Trade centres (characterised by objects such as weights and seals, amulets, jewellery and cosmetics)
8. Water supply systems

Significantly, with the exception of criterion 7, the buildings at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud exhibit (or can be assumed to have exhibited) each of these characteristics:

1. *Proximity to trade route*: as discussed above, the settlement seems to have been situated at an intersection of north-south and east-west trade routes.
2. *Separation from local population*: according to Ayalon, the extraordinary absence of hand-made “Negevite” type vessels at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud raises the question whether the nomads of the desert were banned from settling at the site (see further below).  

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3. **Existence of sleeping accommodation:** the existence of sleeping accommodations can be assumed, perhaps on the upper storey.

4. **Food preparation and consumption areas:** food preparation areas were found at both ends of the courtyard.

5. **Animal holding pens:** as noted by Hadley, the central courtyard of Building A could have been used as an overnight pen for animals. Remnants of animal dung unearthed at floor level in the courtyard lend credence to this possibility. In addition, a trough-like installation was located in the alcove between the bent-axis gate and the north-eastern corner room on the outside of Building A. The excavators plausibly identified this as a feeding trough.

6. **Security post or fortresses:** there is no evidence that a garrison was stationed at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (e.g. no weapons or amour), but, as noted above, the design and location of Building A on top of the hill made it eminently defensible. Furthermore, in the *editio princeps*, Meshel and Goren noted several enigmatic piles of pebbles that had been brought up from the Wadi Quraiya. As these were located in the corners of courtyard near the base of the stairs, perhaps they should be explained as missiles and sling-stones (cf. 1 Sam 17:40) stockpiled for the defence of the settlement.

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127 Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 31, 33. However, it cannot be proved that the dung was contemporary with the occupation levels, and it may have been deposited by passing animals, traders, or desert nomads shortly after the abandonment of Phase 3.

128 As noted by Meshel and Goren, this installation was coated in mud rather than hydraulic plaster, indicating that it was used for feeding not watering animals. Pieces of dry matter mixed with straw on the ground near this trough might be dung of livestock; Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 21.

129 This interpretation was rejected by the excavators, who suggested that they were meant to be used as part of the courtyard pavement, in order to prevent the surface of the
7. *Trade centres*: there was no clear evidence for seals or weights, indicating commercial activity, but that is hardly surprising given the remote location of the site.

8. *Water supply systems*: the hill overlooked an important perennial water-source.

However, these criteria are sufficiently general to include the basic necessities of any remote outpost (e.g. shelter, defensibility, access to water). Therefore, in order to support the caravanserai hypothesis one would like to see clear evidence of commercial activity. No such evidence is not forthcoming. In fact, the evidence seems to imply the opposite. In an important study of the distribution of locally produced pottery types throughout southern Jordan and the Negev, Piotr Bienkowski and Eveline van der Steen argued that the pattern of pottery distribution (especially the so-called Edomite Ware) could reflect the movements of local nomads as middlemen in the lucrative Arabian incense or spice trade. Significantly, in the view of Bienkowski and van der Steen, the distribution of Edomite pottery suggests that during the Late Iron Age the Beersheba valley and the Wadi Arabah formed a vital land-bridge for commercial activities between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Mediterranean Coast. More recently

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130 This does not diminish the value of Thareani-Sussely’s criteria in the context of urban caravanserais, which, was her primary focus at Tel ’Aroer.


Juan Manuel Tebes endorsed this interpretation with a view to economic development under the aegis of the Neo-Assyrian Empire at the end of the 8th century. Correspondingly, the almost complete absence of Edomite pottery at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, may suggest that the more difficult route along the *Darb el-Ghazzeh* was not much used during the Late Iron Age. If Singer-Avitz and Lipiński are correct to date the foundation of Kuntillet 'Ajrud to the end of the 8th century (which, for the reasons outlined above, seems improbable), then this exceptional gap in the ceramic assemblage is difficult to account for; especially in light of the Edomite wares found elsewhere along the *Darb el-Ghazzeh* (i.e. Kadesh Barnea and Tell el-

Beersheba route occurred in the last third of the 8th century, specifically under the aegis of Neo-Assyrian economic development.

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134 Tebes, “Assyrians, Judeans, Pastoral Groups, and the Trade Patterns in the Late Iron Age Negev”, 625. David Ussishkin has argued that the *floruit* of Kuntillet 'Ajrud corresponds a period of abandonment at Tell el-Qudeirat; David Ussishkin, “The Rectangular Fortress at Kadesh-Barnea”, *IEJ* 45 (1995): 119–27, esp.126–27. It seems that it was not until the Assyrian attempts to control the regional economy at the end of the 8th century that the later fortress was built; cf. Na’aman, “An Assyrian Residence at Ramat Rahel?”, 267–70; although Finkelstein, “Horvat Qîtimî”, 163, has offered a cautionary note. If Ussishkin’s understanding is correct, this would seem to support the inference that commercial activity along the *Darb el-Ghazzeh* was relatively modest during this period.
But, the Arabian trade must have pre-dated Assyrian interests in the region, and the absence of local pottery types at Kuntillet ʿAjrud also needs to be explained if the settlement is dated to the first half of the 8th century. In other words, regardless of whether the floruit of the site is dated to the beginning or the end of the 8th century, the dearth of local pottery types suggests that there was little or no commerce with the local populations.³⁶

Of course, the absence of such types does not automatically preclude the possibility that trade passed via Kuntillet ʿAjrud. Due to the perishable nature of the trade goods, we should not necessarily expect archaeological traces of spice trade itself.³⁷ Consequently, it might be conjectured that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was founded as part of a state-run project intended to cut out the middle-man and gain direct access to the Arabian incense trade, presumably by connecting with the Arabian traders at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba.³⁸ But, even so, the exclusion of local pottery types in the ceramic assemblage at Kuntillet ʿAjrud hints at an uneasy relationship with the local nomadic communities, suggesting that this was a comparatively modest operation.

This situation seems to be consistent with Naʿaman’s hypothesis that there was a Judahite resurgence in the southern Negev during the days of

³⁸ Noting the scarcity of artefacts of Arabian origin in southern Jordan and the Negev, Tebes has plausibly suggested that the Arabian caravans only travelled as far as southern Edom and the Negev, at which point the Edomite and Negevite pastoral groups carried out the transport of Arabian Incense from Edom to the Mediterranean coast; Tebes, “Trade and Nomads”, 54–55. Hence, it is unlikely that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was utilised, or at least administered, by Arabian caravaneers, as Finkelstein seems to assume; Finkelstein, “Ḥorvat Qîmtît”, 163.
King Azariah (cf. 2 Kgs 14:22). According to Na’aman, the remote location of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud on the less lucrative Darb el-Ghazzeh may have been the result of the refusal of the kings of Judah to allow Israel to participate in the trade that passed via the Wadi Arabah. In that case, however, it is a fortiori unlikely that the predominance of Judahite and Philistian wares should be viewed as tribute levied by Jeroboam II, as discussed above. I am at a loss to explain this seeming contradiction. Perhaps, then, it is best to follow Finkelstein, and simply attribute the location of the site to the alternating preference between the eastern route along the Darb el-Ghazzeh and the western route through the Wadi Arabah and the Beersheba Valley in the pre-Assyrian period.

As an aside, shell remains (found in very small numbers) might provide further support for the hypothesis that Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was related to the north-south trade routes. Two species, *Glycymeris inscubria* and *Stramonita haemastoma* originate from the Mediterranean Sea. And two species, *Lambis truncata sebae* (Seba’s spider conch) and the comparatively rare *Monetaria moneta*, originate from the Red Sea. A similar picture emerges with regard to the fish bones (also found in small numbers). Particularly interesting, however, are several bone fragments

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140 This is not altogether implausible when it is considered that the items in question include storage vessels, which may have remained in use for some time.
that were identified as belonging to Nile Perch, *Lates niloticus*.\(^{145}\) This might reflect contacts to the north, south, and west. However, each of these species was traded widely throughout the eastern Mediterranean, and, as such, the presence of fish and shells in such small numbers might reflect nothing more than the fact that the site was provisioned from outside.\(^{146}\)

Yet another hypothesis that has garnered relatively wide acceptance is that Kuntillet ’Ajrud was an ancient pilgrim station on the route to Sinai.\(^{147}\) This suggestion goes some way toward explaining the remote location of the site and the nature and quantity of religious inscriptions found there; especially those that are perceived to contain benedictory prayers. Furthermore, according to this hypothesis, it might be possible to account for the inscription naming “YHWH of Samaria” (*Kajr*3.1) as an offering deposited by a pilgrim from the northern capital.\(^{148}\) However, Na’aman has explicitly rejected this proposal, arguing that pilgrimages to

\(^{145}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 332.

\(^{146}\) Cf. ibid, 332.


far-off destinations were unknown before the Byzantine period. But despite Na‘aman’s objections, there is evidence in the Hebrew Bible for pilgrimages to holy sites. Specifically, in connection with the pilgrimage festivals at the sanctuaries at Bethel, Gilgal, Shiloh and Jerusalem (e.g. Exod 34:23–24; Deut 16:16; 31:11; 1 Sam 1:3; 1 Kgs 3:4; 12:29–30; Isa 2:3 = Micah 4:2; Isa 30:29; Lam 1:4; Ezek 46:9; Amos 4:4; cf. later Zech 14:16–19). An analogy for the custom of journeying into the wilderness to worship the deity might also be drawn from Moses and Aaron’s request that Pharaoh permit the people to go into the desert (מבא) to celebrate a festival (חג; Exod 5:1). In an earlier study Na‘aman and Lissovsky attempted to draw a distinction between these short-distance pilgrimages and the sort of long-distance pilgrimage assumed by the pilgrim station hypothesis. However, it is worth noting that this distinction was created

150 The account of Elijah’s flight to Horeb (1 Kgs 19:3–9) is often cited in arguments for a common pilgrimage route from Israel to Sinai; cf., already, Gustav Westpal, Jahwes Wohnstätten nach den Anschauungen der Alten Hebräer: eine alttestamentliche Untersuchung (BZAW 15; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1908), 60). However, Na‘aman dismisses the narrative as post-exilic and anachronistic; cf. Na‘aman, “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud”, 315, n.9. Regardless of its date, the evidence of 1 Kgs 19:3–9 requires a large measure of inference, and it would be unwise to place too much emphasis on it.
151 An Egyptian parallel might be inferred from the work-lists from Deir el-Medina (e.g. BM 5643) in Ramesside Egypt, which record days spent at work and days off of the royal workforce. One of the reasons given for absenteeism in these lists is that an individual was “making an offering to his god”. As some of these were absent for several days at a time, it is tempting to speculate that the offerings included travel to the appropriate shrine; cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Translations, vol. 3 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 361 – 68; see also the discussion and additional references in idem, On The Reliability of the Old Testament (Crand Rapids, Mi.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 248, 553, n.10. I am indebted to Boyo Ockinga for this parallel.
by Na’aman and Lissovsky themselves and is not found in the ancient Near Eastern sources. As such, their objection amounts to an argument from silence. In other words, there is an underlying assumption that because we have no direct evidence for long-distance pilgrimages, they are unlikely to have occurred.\footnote{A more cautious approach was adopted by Allen Kerkeslager, “Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt”, in Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt (ed. David Frankfurter; Religions in the Greco-Roman World 134; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 99–225, esp. 147–52, who stressed the lack of direct evidence for established pre-exilic pilgrim routes and argues that Jewish pilgrimage was a virtually unknown phenomenon in the Greco-Roman period, but, nevertheless, admits the possibility of pre-exilic pilgrimages to Sinai and Horeb.} Indeed, it could be countered that long and short-distance pilgrimages are inherently related phenomena and that it is the nature of the destination and its religious associations that are important, not the difficulty involved in getting there.\footnote{Of course, there are practical constraints (e.g. expense) determining who might be able to undertake such a journey and at what times, but that does not necessarily invalidate the basic pilgrimage hypothesis.} Even so, there is little direct evidence, beyond the dedicatory inscriptions, to support the pilgrim station hypothesis.

Then again, elaborating on the suggestion that it was the location of the site that was important Na’aman has raised the possibility that the hill of Kuntillet ʿAjrud might have been identified as Mount Sinai itself; the precise location of which was unknown in the Late Iron Age.\footnote{If I have understood it correctly, Na’aman’s proposal is not that the site be identified with the historical Mount Sinai—the precise location of which was unknown—but that, due to its southern location, the mound of Kuntillet ʿAjrud came to be identified with the traditions about the Mountain of God, perhaps by travellers along the Darb el-Ghazzeh; cf. Na’aman, “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet ʿAjrud”, 316.} In this case, the settlement might be understood to be a religious site established by passing traders in honour of YHWH. However, Na’aman rejected this possibility too, arguing that typically such sites were built at the base of
the mountain, rather than on its summit where the divine presence was believed to dwell.¹⁵⁶

Be that as it may, Mount Sinai was not the only site in the region to have a divine association. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the references to YHWH of (the) Teman in *Kajr*3.6, 3.9 and 4.1, and, more particularly, the

¹⁵⁶ Na’aman, “The Inscriptions of Kuntillet Ajrud”, 316.
vocabulary and imagery of Kajr4.2 connect the site to the biblical tradition of southern theophany.\textsuperscript{157} Consequently, the significance of the site might derive from its being situated in a region that was traditionally identified with the immanence of YHWH of Teman.\textsuperscript{158} In fact, the east-west orientation of the hilltop means that Kuntillet ʿAjrud faced toward the region of Teman in Edom. This eastward orientation is particularly suggestive when considered in light of Habakkuk 3:3: "Eloah comes from Teman". In his commentary on Habakkuk, Francis Andersen observed that "[w]ith the image of the sunrise, the perspective of Habakkuk 3:3 is that of a resident of the Negeb or farther south. It describes the progress of God from the east westward, not a march from the south northward" (cf. §C.4).\textsuperscript{159} This is certainly plausible, and, in the case of Kuntillet ʿAjrud, it is demonstrably true. More generally, the eastward orientation is reminiscent of Ezekiel 8:16: "and behold, at the entrance to the temple of YHWH, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, their backs to the temple of YHWH and their faces to the east, and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun". In this regard, it is interesting to reconsider the drawing of the processional on Pithos B. The orb above the heads of the left-most figures might be a sketch of an unfinished sixth figure, but its position above and to the left of the figures


\textsuperscript{158} The possibility that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was some sort of regional cult site dedicated to YHWH of Teman has already been raised by McCarter: "‘Yahweh of Teman,’ therefore, must be Yahweh as he was worshiped in the region of Teman. This does not exclude the possibility, however, that there was a particular shrine where the Temanite Yahweh’s cult was located”; McCarter, “Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy”, 140.

\textsuperscript{159} Francis I. Andersen, Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 292
raises the possibility that it should be interpreted as a solar disk. If so, then
the scene is strikingly reminiscent of Egyptian Aten worshiping scenes of
the Amarna period (fig.4.3). Cumulatively, the evidence suggests that
Kuntillet ʿAjrud was home to some sort of religious activities associated
with the solar theophany of Yahweh of Teman.

In light of this association it is interesting to revisit an alternative
hypothesis that has received relatively little attention in the academic
literature. In 1982 Alessandro Catastini suggested that Kuntillet ʿAjrud
might have been inhabited by a community of prophets. The prophetic
hypothesis was based primarily on biblical references connecting bands of
itinerant prophets with the wilderness areas (e.g. the Elijah-Elisha cycle),
as well as the large number of “votive” offerings found at the site, and
Catastini’s ultimately unconvincing attempt to read ‏lington‬ “leader of the
community” (viz. “community” of prophets) in Kajr2.5 (cf. §3.2.2). As
such, the hypothesis was essentially speculative, and it has largely been
ignored in subsequent discussions. Nevertheless, when the site as a
whole is considered together with its artefacts and inscriptions, the
hypothesis that Kuntillet ʿAjrud was occupied by a community of prophets
holds considerable explanatory potential:

(1) First, as noted above, the inscriptions explicitly identify Kuntillet
ʿAjrud with a region that was traditionally associated with
theophany (cf. §2.8.2). As such, it was a liminal place, on the
boundary between the human and divine planes. Such places are
frequently sites of mantic activity.

160 A similar interpretation of this scene has also been advanced by J. Glen Taylor, “Was
163 One of the few attempts to deal systematically with Catastini’s arguments was
presented in Hadley, The Cult of Asherah, 112–14; however, she rejected the suggestion
due to a lack of evidence.
164 Cf. Kimberley C. Patton, “A Great and Strange Correction’: Intentionality, Locality
and Epiphany in the Category of Dream Incubation” HR 43 (2004): 203–06; with an
(2) There is a possible reference to a prophet (or, prophets?) accompanied by an illustration in *Kajr* 4.5.

(3) The drawing of the seated lyre player on Pithos A has generated considerable discussion.\(^{165}\) Various inconclusive attempts have been made to determine the identity of the figure, but as far as I am aware none has yet attempted to associate the image with prophetic activity. There is, however, biblical evidence that attests the use of music to induce a prophetic state (cf. 1 Sam 10:5–6; 2 Kgs 3:15; 1 Chron 25:1).\(^{166}\) These Hebrew sources are

ancient Near Eastern focus specifically, Anne Zgoll, “Die Welt im Schlaf sehen—


\(^{166}\) This evidence is especially valuable because the references to music are of an incidental nature. There can be little doubt in these texts that the music is instrumental in affecting the altered state of the prophet:

ויהי כבך שם תמר פנתה עדים ידים ממטה עמותות של חוף יילים כור באה
ממטהם: ועמדה עליך רוח יהוה והניחו עמים ו tứcפת לאו אחור

"And when you come to the city, there you will meet a band of prophets descending from the high place with harp, timbrel, flute and lyre before them and they will be prophesying. And the spirit of YHWH will descend upon you, and you will prophesy with them and you will be changed into a different person”,

(1 Sam 10:5–6)

ויאמר אלישע יהוה י直辖市 והן ואמר אליה ידיה דיווoultry ידיה דיווoultry ידיה דיווoultry ידיה דיווoultry ידיה דיווoultry ידיה דיווolvency ידיה דיוv

"And Elisha said, ‘As YHWH of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not for the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, whom I regard, I would neither look at you or see you. But now, fetch me a musician’. And, while the musician was playing, the hand of the Lord was upon him” (2 Kgs 3:14–15)
complemented by two texts from Mari describing the ritual of Ištar in which musicians (probably choristers) would perform, apparently in order to induce an ecstatic state in the prophet/prophetess (muhḫūm/muhḫūtum).\textsuperscript{167} As I have already argued, the theophany in \textit{Kajr}4.2 is closely related to biblical hymnic traditions (§2.8.3); there is also reason to believe that \textit{Kajr}3.9 too should be interpreted as a hymn (see §2.4.2), perhaps accompanied by an illustration of a procession of choristers (fig.4.3). If so, might this text preserve a fragment of one of the prepartory hymns performed by the community?\textsuperscript{168}

\textit{ויבדל֯דויד֯ושרי֯הצבא֯לעבדה֯לבני֯אסף֯והימן֯וידותון֯הנבאים֯בכנרות֯בנבלים֯ובמצלתים},

“And David and the leaders of the host set apart for service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, of Jeduthun, the prophets with lyres, harps and cymbals”. (1 Chron 25:1, \textit{Qere})

The situation described in 1 Sam 16:14–23 also seems to be phenomenologically related:

יוהי־הרעה

“And whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and the spirit of Saul was relieved and was well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.” (1 Sam 16:23)

\textsuperscript{167} Texts and translations are reproduced in Marti Nissinen, \textit{Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East} (SBLWAW 12; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 80–83, §51 and §52. Alice Mouton, following a suggestion by Johan de Roos, has also suggested that music and song might have played a part in Hittite mantic rituals, see Alice Mouton, \textit{Rêves hittites: Contribution à une historie et une anthropologie du rêve en Anatolie ancienne} (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 28; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 45; cf. Johan de Roos, “Hittite Votive Texts” in \textit{Acts of Third International Congress of Hittitology, Çorum, September 16-22} (eds. S. Alp and A Süel; Ankara, 1998), 494. While the use of music seems to presuppose some sort of transcendental, or even ecstatic, state was the desired outcome of these activities, it is not my intention to suggest that every ancient Near Eastern prophet was an ecstatic. Cf. the discussion in Jonathan Stökl, \textit{Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison} (Culture and History in the Ancient Near East 56; Leiden: Brill, 2012): 226–27, 230.

\textsuperscript{168} As an aside, it is interesting to note that while these lines have a precatory element (cf. יפה; י {.שאלה}, the thing that is sought is not specified in the extant fragment. Did this hymn perhaps contain a request that a prophetic state be achieved, or that a revelation be
(4) This interpretation of the lyre player on Pithos A also raises questions about the seated figure drawn on the plaster at the entrance to Building A. Following Beck’s reconstruction, which was informed by Egyptian and Phoenician royal iconography, this figure has typically been interpreted to be holding a lotus blossom.\textsuperscript{169} But it has not been considered whether the figure might be compared to the seated lyre player on Pithos A.\textsuperscript{170} Yet, as far as can be discerned the postures of both figures are similar, and although few traces remain of the blossom reconstructed by Beck, what does remain might in fact be consistent with the upper-edge of a lyre held close to the face (cf. fig.4.4).\textsuperscript{171} In view of this alternative interpretation, it is significant that in none of Beck’s comparanda does the seated figure actually hold the flower before their face; rather, the blossom is consistently held either in the lap or beside the hips. To be sure, there are some Egyptian wall paintings in which (non-royal) figures are depicted with a lotus blossom before their faces, but these are always angled toward the face, a position that is not compatible with the surviving traces in the Kuntillet ṬAjrud wall painting. As such, the reconstruction proposed by Beck is one for which no precise


\textsuperscript{170} Beck did suggest that the bichrome drawing of a seated figure on Pithos B (not the lyre player) might have been a “study piece” for one of the wall paintings, cf. Beck, “The Drawings from Horvat Teiman”, 43.

\textsuperscript{171} Note that Beck described the arms of the lyre player on Pithos A as “unnaturally long”, cf. Beck, “The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet ṬAjrud)” \textit{TA} 9 (1982): 31. The restoration proposed here would be better proportioned.
parallel is known to exist.\textsuperscript{172} This explanation of the plaster drawing might, in turn, suggest that the enigmatic figure standing behind the seated figure could also be interpreted as a musician, perhaps playing a frame drum (?)\textsuperscript{173} If this alternative reconstruction is accepted, then the prominent placement of the plaster drawing at the entrance to Building A testifies to the importance of music in the experience of the inhabitants at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.

![Fig. 4.4—LEFT: Beck’s reconstruction of the seated figure; CENTRE: proposed reconstruction of the seated figure; RIGHT: the lyre player on Pithos A](image)

(5) In her study of the drawings from Kuntillet ʿAjrud Beck raised the possibility that the two Bes-like figures on Pithos A might be

\textsuperscript{172} I am indebted to Tamara Wearne for this observation. See the discussion and illustrations in Beck, “The Drawings from Ḥorvat Teiman”, 55; Meshel, \textit{Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Ḥorvat Teman)}, 192; Ziffer, “Portraits of Ancient Israelite Kings?”, 41–51.

\textsuperscript{173} For depictions of both a seated lyre player and a standing hand-drummer, cf. the rock etchings from Jebel Ideid in the southern Negev, which have been interpreted to represent a dance scene; Joachim Braun, \textit{Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written, and Comparative Sources} (Grand Rapids Mi.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 71–74, discussion with illustrations). Compare the bronze seal discussed by Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, \textit{Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel} (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 221, illus.229,223, 224. Note also the references to both percussive and stringed instruments in the biblical passages cited above.
interpreted as dancing to the accompaniment of the lyre. To support this suggestion, Beck cited the common association of Bes with music and dance in Egyptian iconography. If correct, this too might have prophetic implications, as the phenomenon of using dance to achieve a state of altered consciousness is widely attested across cultures with many ethnographic parallels. Special mention should be made here to the first-millennium B.C.E. omen series Šumma ālu I, lines 106–112, in which cultic dancers (ḫuppû) and possibly musicians (viz. balaggu players, ṑiš balaggi) are named alongside other mantic specialists, including male and female dreamers (šabrûšabrâtu), performers of incubation (muttaʾilâtu) and haruspices (bârûti). Could it be, then, that both the figure of the lyre player and the dancing Bes figures were engaged in ritual acts to induce a vision?


177 Might we go even further and suggest that the Bes faces were in fact masks worn by the dancers? Given Bes’ stereotypical role as a protector god, it may be that the masks were intended as a safe-guard for the dancer while they were in a transcendental state and,
Incidentally, according to this interpretation it matters little that the right-hand Bes figure is now widely accepted to be female, as it is the iconographic connotations of dance and music, and the apotropaic significance of Bes that are important.\(^\text{178}\) In any case, there is considerable biblical evidence for the existence of female prophets (בָּשָׂר, בָּשָׂר) as well as male (cf. Exod 15:20; Judg 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chron 34:22; Isa 8:3; Ezek 13:17–23; Nah 6:14).\(^\text{179}\)

(6) Although it is not uncommon for Bes to be depicted as (partially) naked in Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian contexts, it is ex hypothesis tempting to interpret the scene on Pithos A in light of 1 Sam 19:24:

וַיִּפְתֶּשׁ מֵאָרָיו בָּנֹאָם לְפָנָיו שָׂמָאָל וַיְנִבְּאוּ מִפְּנֵי שָׂמָאָל וַיִּפְלֶהּ כָּל־הָעַלְו וַיְהִי כָּל־הָיִמּוֹ מִפְּנֵי שָׂמָאָל; "then he [Saul] too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel. And he lay naked all that day and all that night. Therefore it is therefore, possibly more susceptible to the influence of malignant powers. But this would be to wander too far down the path of speculation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Hadley has also suggested that dance of Bes should be interpreted as an apotropaic dance; cf. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 150.

\(^{178}\) The nature of the appendage between the legs of the left-hand Bes figure has been central to the discussion of the gender of the two figures (and consequently whether they may be interpreted as YHWH and his Asherah). In my opinion the double line on the bulge to the left of this appendage, which is reasonably clear in the recently published photographs, is best explained as an attempt to represent testes, assuring the interpretation of the appendage as a phallus, rather than a tail. For my part, I am not convinced that the editors were correct to omit the appendage from the figure on the right. In the published photographs there is a faint mark—the same colour as the other ink traces—between the legs of the figure in question. However, without access to the originals this cannot be verified.

\(^{179}\) Although it should be noted with Keel and Uhlinger that the depiction of the procession of worshipers on Pithos B contains only men, and the same is true of the onomastic evidence, which names only masculine PNN; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 225. For a more detailed discussion of women prophets in ancient Israel, see Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 186–92.
said, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’”. It should be noted that the reference to Saul removing his clothing belongs to a larger literary motif, spanning the Saul-David cycle, in which actions related to donning or removing items of clothing symbolises the transference of the kingship; however, once again, there is comparative evidence that lends credibility to the underlying practice of the removal of clothing in ancient Near Eastern cultic and mantic contexts. While this suggestion might, at first, appear to afford too little weight to the well-attested iconographic conventions concerning Bes, it may be justified by comparison with the procession of worshipers on Pithos B. Due to the fact that no attempt was made to represent clothing (i.e. a kilt), these figures likewise appear to be naked, at least below the waist—although the triangle between the legs of the three middle figures might represent a loin-cloth of some sort. This point has seldom been discussed (although Beck did suggest that a phallus might be represented on the figure second from the left), and has never been explained. Even so, this observation must be treated with utmost caution; the system of vertical and horizontal lines covering the torsos of all five figures

180 Isa 20:2–4 might also be considered in this context, but there the reference to the nakedness of the prophet is clearly described as a symbolic foreshadowing of the impending captivity and nakedness of Egypt.

181 For the motif of the transference of clothing as a symbol of the transference of the kingship in the Saul-David cycle, see Ora Horn Prouser, “Suited to the Throne: The Symbolic Use of Clothing in the David and Saul Narratives”, *JSOT* 71 (1996): 27–37; for the comparative ANE evidence, see the discussion in Kim, *Incubation as a Type-Scene*, 109–13.

182 For a convenient discussion see Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 137–44.

183 The central figure does have dots covering its legs, but it is far from certain that these were intended to represent clothing, cf. Beck, “The Drawings from Ḥorvat Teiman”, 40. The exception is the figure on the extreme right, who might be wearing a longer garment of some sort.

184 Ibid, 38.
are in some ways reminiscent of the markings on the line-drawings from Khirbet Beit Lei, and might have been intended to represent clothing.\(^{185}\)

(7) Following this line of enquiry further, one might be tempted to interpret the enigmatic dots covering the figures on both of the decorated pithoi in light of 1 Kgs 18:28: ויקראו֯בקול֯גדול֯ויתגדדו֯כמשפטם֯בחרבות֯وبرמחים֯עד־שפך־דם֯עליהם “Then they cried out in a great voice, and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed over them”.\(^{186}\) Do these markings represent lacerations similar to those described in the story about the priests of Baal?\(^{187}\) Owing to the uncertain date of the tale in 1 Kgs 18 and its polemic intent, this cannot be regarded as anything but a (remote) possibility.

(8) Several biblical texts refer to communities or guilds of prophets attached to a charismatic leader (cf. 1 Sam 10:5, 10–12; 19:20; 1 Kgs 18:19; 20:35; 2 Kgs 2;12, 7, 15–18; 4:1, 38; 5:15, 22; 6:1; 9:1; Isa 8:16).\(^{188}\) It will be immediately evident that the

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\(^{185}\) Cf. Joseph Naveh, “Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave” IEJ 13 (1963): 74–92, esp. figs. 4 and 7. Note that the Kh. Beit Lei figures resemble the ’Ajrud figures in other respects, too; specifically, Naveh’s interpretation of the “praying figure” and the “figure with a lyre”.


\(^{187}\) Although 1 Kgs 18:28 attempts to distinguish the Yahwistic prophet from such actions by the comment “according to their custom (כמשפטם),” this may be attributable to the polemic intent of the account. It should also be noted that this suggestion does not explain the horizontal and vertical lines that cover the torsos of the five figures.

\(^{188}\) These bands are referred to variously as חֲבָל (1 sam 10:5); <דָּלָל> (1 Sam 19:20; following McCarter in emending the לְקָחַת on the basis of LXX’s תֶּהֶלֶת, cf. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary (AB 8; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 327–28); נַפְשֶׁת (2 Kings 5:15); לְצָרְזָה (Isa 8:16); but most commonly בְּנֵי־הַנְּבֵיאָמָה (e.g. 1 Kgs 20:35, etc.). The latter epithet might also lie behind Amos 7:14 “I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet” לא־נביא֯אנכי֯ולא֯בן־נביא֯אנכי, and Jeremiah 35:4 “And I brought them to the house of the Lord into the chamber of
communities attached to Elijah and Elisha are over-represented in this list. This poses a redaction-critical problem, as the disputed provenance of the Elijah-Elisha cycle means it is unclear to what extent these references may be considered historically reliable and to what extent they may be anachronistic.\(^{189}\) The same may also be true of Isa 8:16, which might be an interpolation.\(^{190}\) Attempts to circumvent this difficulty are almost inescapably circular. However, the two passages in 1 Sam offer a faint possibility of escaping this circularity. That is because these passages are part of elaborate aetiologies for the proverbial saying הַגָּמֶר שָאָל בְנֵי בּוֹא יִשְׂרָאֵל, “is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Sam 10:11; 19:24). It makes no difference which of these aetiologies (if either) is correct; what does matter is that the reference was intelligible to the audience of the Deuteronomistic History. Indeed, in this instance, the fact that competing aetiologies are offered lends weight to the authenticity of the proverb. Consequently, we may, cautiously, conclude that the reference to bands of prophets reflects some sort of historical social reality, probably dating within a couple of centuries of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.

(9) There is considerable biblical evidence for state sponsored prophetic activity in Iron Age Israel; cf. the court prophets Nathan (2 Sam 7:1–3) and Gad (2 Sam 24:11), and the prophets

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\(^{189}\) See the recent discussion in Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 220, n.78.

associated with the courts of Ahab (1 Kgs 18:19; 22:6) and Zedekiah (Jer 37:2, 19). Other prophets were attached to the temples at Bethel, Gilgal, and Jerusalem (e.g. 2 Kgs 2:3; 4:38; Jer 23:11; 26:7–8, 11, 16; 28:1 35:4; Lam 2:20; cf. 1 Sam 10:5).

A similar situation seems to be reflected at Mari and in the Neo-Assyrian prophecies. Hypothetically, the presence of a state sponsored community of prophets at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, could explain the interest of the northern kingdom in provisioning the site.

(10) There is also evidence for an direct association between some biblical prophets and the priesthood; e.g. 2 Kgs 22:4; Jer 26:7, 8; 29:8 (note also that Jeremiah is identified as the son of Hilkiah, Jer 1:1, which might suggest that he belonged to the family of the high priest); Ezek 1:3; Hag 1:1). This is consistent with the possible evidence (i.e. the linen and šaʿāněz fragments) that a community of priests occupied the site.

(11) The use of letters to transmit prophetic messages is well attested in Israel and the ancient Near East; e.g. Lachish 3; Lachish 16; Jer 29:1, 31; the prophetic letters from Mari; and the reports of prophetic oracles in the Neo-Assyrian letters. This

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192 Mazar suggested that the inhabitants Kuntillet ʿAjrud possibly could be identified with the scribal clans named in 1 Chron 2:55; cf. Amihai Mazar, Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E. (Doubleday: New York, 1990), 449. But this is probably going too far; although it is interesting to note the Kenite connection in Kajr4.3 (cf. 1 Chron 2:55b).

practice may be compared to the letter fragments transcribed onto the two pithoi (Kajr3.1 and 3.6), which seem to reflect letters sent back and forth between Samaria and Kuntillet 'Ajrud. This is not positive evidence for a prophetic community, nor does it Kajr3.1 and 3.6 were themselves related to prophecy, but the evidence for written correspondence is consistent with known mechanisms for the communication of prophetic utterances. In this connection, it is interesting to note a number of examples in which a prophetic oracle is explicitly identified as a response to royal supplication (e.g. SAA 9 1.8; Zakkur A:11–12; cf. Jer 37:2). If the letters do reflect direct contact with the northern capital (note the probable title רע֯המלך in Kajr3.1), then perhaps the prophetic community was a royal enterprise, commissioned to intercede and seek guidance on behalf of the king.

(12) Recently Koowon Kim has conducted a major comparative study of dream incubation in the ancient Near East. As part of this study Kim identified various ritual activities used by the incubant to prepare for a vision. Examples cited by Kim include, among other things, purification rites, grain-offerings, pouring libations, crying, offering prayers and oaths, fasting, remaining silent, putting on special clothing, going naked and suspending daily routine. Each of these activities could have been performed at Kuntillet 'Ajrud without leaving a trace in the archaeological record. After all, we have no anepigraphic evidence for any other prophet from this period.

Near Eastern Prophets, 176–79, 399–402. See also the convenient collections and discussion in Nissinen, Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East.

194 Kim, Incubation as a Type-Scene, 69–70; cf. Patton, “A Great and Strange Correction”, 202–03. These ritual activities could plausibly be extended to waking visions, and it is, therefore, unnecessary to assume that dream incubation (specifically) was conducted at Kuntillet 'Ajrud.
Finally, it is possible that the large limestone basin (Kajr 1.2) should be understood in connection to purification rites (e.g. washing hands and feet). Ritual cleansing before divine encounters is well attested in the Hebrew Bible: e.g. in Exod 19:10 the Israelites are required to wash their clothes before the Sinai theophany; meanwhile in Exodus and Leviticus there are explicit instructions for Aaron and his sons to wash before approaching God in the tabernacle (Exod 29:4; 30:17–21; 40:12, 30–31; Lev 8:6). The preceding are largely concerned with priestly cleanliness, but in 2 Kgs 3:11 Elisha is described as אחריו יציקם על ידי אליהו, one “who used to pour water over the hands of Elijah”, which may have mantic connotations, although this is not assured. It may even be possible to draw a direct analogy with the bronze basin (כינור) described in Exod 30:17–21 (cf. Exod 38:8; 40:7). Based on references from the Second Temple period we might surmise that the stone basin was used because it was believed to be immune from defilement (cf. John 2:6; m. 'Ohal. 5:5). Hence, the hypothesis that Kuntillet 'Ajrud was inhabited by a priestly-prophetic community offers some explanation for the labour invested in transporting this immense object to the site.

Furthermore, it may be no coincidence that the narrative in 2 Kgs 3:4–20 presupposes that the northern prophet Elisha could be located in the region of the wilderness of Edom. This is not to imply that a specific allusion to Kuntillet 'Ajrud was intended in this passage, but simply that it might preserve an underlying historical recollection.

The above points are, of course, highly conjectural, but the appeal of the hypothesis of a community of priestly-prophets lies in its ability to account not only for the remote location of Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and the

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195 It is possible that this simply reflects a social custom and the privileged proximity of a favoured disciple, but it should be noted that the phrase is nowhere else used in the Hebrew Bible.
interest of the northern capital in provisioning the site, but also for a number of the most important inscriptions and drawings, together with the (possible) evidence for a priestly presence. Crucially, as many mantic activities would leave little or no trace in the archaeological record, this hypothesis also provides some explanation for the absence of the sorts of items that we would usually expect to find associated with other cultic activities.

4.8.1. TOWARD AN EXPLANATION

In light of the foregoing, and taking account of the diachronic perspective, I tentatively propose the following scenario. Kuntillet ʿAjrud was initially constructed at the end of the 9th century or the beginning of the 8th as a caravanserai overlooking and protecting an important watering-hole (Phase 1). There is no way of knowing whether in the initial phase(s) the site was associated with the northern kingdom of Israel, since all of the inscribed materials were found on the Phase 3 floor—meaning they can only be directly associated with the final period of occupation. After some time there was a partial collapse of the Phase 1 complex. A short while later the buildings were rebuilt (Phase 2). However, this seems to have been an intermediate stage, anticipating a fundamental shift in the way the site was used. In the final stage (Phase 3) the benches were constructed in the bench-room and the KAPT were written on the newly plastered walls. It was at this time that Building B was constructed. Evidence for the weaving of fabrics suggests that in this phase the site was occupied on a permanent or semi-permanent basis (cf. §2.5).\(^\text{196}\) The eastern orientation of the hill-top and the hymnic theophany (Kajr4.2) written on the wall of the bench-room suggest an association with the cult of YHWH of Teman, whose appearing was (symbolically) manifest as the sun rose each morning over Edom to the East. It seems that during this phase the settlement was occupied by a community of priests who were also

\[^{196}\text{Pace Hadley, The Cult of Asherah, 111.}\]
prophets of Yhwh (and Asherah?), drawn to the area as a place of divine immanence.\(^{197}\) This community was apparently royally sanctioned and it was evidently of considerable importance as it was provisioned with wares drawn from around the kingdom of Israel, perhaps including tribute from Jerusalem. Furthermore, the transcribed letter fragments (\textit{Kajr}3.1 and 3.6) suggest that the community maintained correspondence with the royal administration in Samaria.

Sometime in the second half of the 8\(^{th}\) century the site was abandoned. There is no evidence that this was a hurried process. At that time, or shortly after, the buildings were again damaged, perhaps by an earthquake. There were no attempts to rebuild.

4.9. The Archaeology of the KAPT

With this provisional historical reconstruction in mind, we may now turn to consider the physical context of the plaster texts. The following discussion will examine the KAPT within four radiating contexts or spheres of interaction, beginning at the level of the writing surface, then at the level of the room, then the larger building or complex of rooms of which the room is a part, then at the level of the settlement as a whole. It should be recognised, however, that this is ultimately an artificial division. In the words of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre: “[v]isible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from social space by barriers and walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that

\(^{197}\) Given the ability of sunstroke to induce delirium and hallucination, it tempting to speculate that the community at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was an ecstatic cult that used music and sun-exposure on the platform structure to induce a vision; however, this goes far beyond the evidence.
space.\textsuperscript{198} This complexity is compounded when we move beyond architectonics and consider patterns of behaviour conducted within and between physical spaces.\textsuperscript{199} Consequently, the following discussion will attempt, as far as possible, to be responsive to functional and conceptual relationships between spaces, particularly as these would have been experienced in transitioning from one to another.

As discussed in the Introduction (§1.7), the governing principle will be interactive, focussing primarily on how an audience would have experienced a given text, with particular emphasis given to lines of sight.

4.9.1. \textit{The Writing surface}

Analysis of the writing surface entails two aspects: (1) the technologies and techniques involved in the preparation of materials and the act of writing; (2) the physical arrangement of the inscribed fragments.

(1) \textit{The writing surface and materials}

The white plaster was apparently made of local gypsum, applied in two thin layers over the crude mud-plaster that coated the walls of the


\textsuperscript{199} This subject is vast, and far exceeds the scope of the present discussion. Indeed much of the discussion in \textit{The Production of Space} was given matters of abstract, or social space; cf. also the lengthy critique in Edward Dimendberg, “Henri Lefebvre on Abstract Space”, in \textit{The Production of Public Space} (eds. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith; Philosophy and Geopgraphy 2; Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998),17–48. What is important to note in this regard, however, is that the use of space can be responsive and dynamic, not merely static and deterministic. In other words, the manner in which individuals and groups interact with and within a space is conditioned by convention, past experience, and present and future exigency, as well as the physical features of the space. This brings us back to Foley’s discussions of performance arena, and the horizons of expectations that audiences bring to bear on a performance event.
The Archaeological Context of the KAPT

complex. The base layer (which was not always present) consisted of unslaked gypsum with some lime inclusions, while the outer gesso was composed of slaked gypsum without grits.

There is nothing intrinsic to gypsum-plaster that might suggest that it held a specifically cultic or religious significance. However, it is worth noting that the plaster was restricted to certain areas of the site, located mostly at the eastern end of the complex and the east-facing wall at the western end of the courtyard in Building A. Some parts of the complex appear to have been roofed (e.g. the eastern entrance to Building A and the

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200 See Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 3: “[f]rom a morpho-geological point of view Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is a residual hill structure of hard chalk with gypsum veins (Ghareb Formation). These were the materials for the buildings on the site”.

201 Ibid, 199.


Fig.4.5—The benches at the entrance to Building A, looking North.
northern wing of Building B), and in those areas the use of gypsum-plaster may have been intended simply to illuminate the dimly-lit rooms. But this does not seem to be the case for the (apparently) open-air platform structure of Building B, which also seems to have been coated with gypsum-plaster (cf. §4.3).203 As such, the restricted use of gypsum might suggest that the plaster was applied to demarcate certain sections as, in some way, separate from the rest of the complex; although the reason for this is not immediately clear (see below).

An alternative possibility that has not yet been discussed in the literature is that the reflective plaster was applied to the external surfaces in order to cool the site from the daytime heat (see §4.1). The use of white surfaces to reflect sunlight and limit thermal retention is a well attested strategy still used in modern building design, especially in warm dry climates.204 In this case, the use of the white plaster on the internal surfaces of the bench room might have been intended to maximise light in the comparatively dark space (note that the plastered floor in the entrance to Building A would have created an effect similar to a lightwell). Otherwise, it might have been merely decorative or aesthetic.

Incidentally, it may be noted that the bench-lined extension forming the bent-axis entrance to Building A would have blocked sunlight for much of the morning, thereby providing a shaded and comparatively cool place to sit (fig.4.5; cf. 1 Sam 1:9; Prov 9:14; Tobit 7:1).205

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203 Cf. the discussion in Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 57.
205 It should also be noted that the low surface area to volume ration of the long rooms to the east, south, and west of Building A corresponds to a building principle still used to regulate heat gain/loss; see Arvind Krishan, Climate Responsive Architecture: A Design Handbook for Energy Efficient Buildings (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Education, 2001), 37.
Fig. 4.6—Location map of the KAPT
It is not clear whether it was intended from the outset that the white plaster would serve as a writing surface. But, if the whitened surfaces were designed to help with temperature regulation, then their use as a writing surface would presumably have been secondary. Furthermore, the fact that pictorial designs were painted directly onto the stone surface at the central entrance to the southern storeroom, suggests that the motivation to decorate the walls was not determined by the plaster alone.\(^{206}\) This seems to confirm that the writings and drawings were, in some sense, additional (or incidental) to the primary purpose of the whitened surfaces (see further below).

Turning to the writing materials, two types of inks were used at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (including the KAPT). The black ink was composed of soot from burnt wood, while the red ink consisted of haematite (i.e. ochre; Fe\(_2\)O\(_3\)), which may have been sourced locally.\(^{207}\)

The writing implement seems to have been a sort of brush, probably fashioned from a reed or rush, with stiff fibres cut to form a chisel-shaped nib (cf. §7.6.1).\(^{208}\) In several places the ink preserves clear traces of the separation of the fibres (e.g. Kajr4.1, line 1). It should be noted, however, that at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (unlike Deir ‘Alla) there was no locally occurring

\(^{206}\) See Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 51, 196.


\(^{208}\) van der Kooij, “Early North-West Semitic Script Traditions”, 252. See also the discussions in Driver, Semitic Writing, 85–86; cf. Ashton, Scribal Habits, 48–50. Note, however, that despite numerous organic finds, no such implement was discovered at the site; see the catalogue of botanical finds in Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 343–50.
source from whence reeds or rushes could be acquired, indicating that the necessary materials were brought to the site from elsewhere.

(2) The arrangement of the fragments

Broadly speaking, the plaster inscriptions can be divided into two groups: collection 1 was discovered at the eastern end of Building A, near the entrance to the bench-room; collection 2 was discovered at the western end of Building A, near the western stairway. Interestingly, the different coloured inks correspond to these two collections (i.e. collection 1 was written with black ink, while collection 2 was written with red ink); however, at present, it is unclear precisely what this distinction signifies. The following outline is based primarily on descriptions published by the excavators, Ze’ev Meshel and Avner Goren, in the recent editio princeps.\(^ {209}\)

**Collection 1**

*Kajr4.1*—The fragments of *Kajr4.1* were discovered on top of the western bench in the northern wing of the bench-room. The plaster pieces remained pressed against the surface of the wall, evidently where they had fallen, suggesting that *Kajr4.1* was written on the eastern face of the wall, at some height above the bench.\(^ {210}\)

*Kajr4.2*—The two fragments of *Kajr4.2* were excavated from a layer of debris on the floor of the vestibule in the western entrance of the bench-room. Beneath the debris, the floor was covered by a layer of ash and charcoal which was interpreted by the excavators as evidence of a ceiling.\(^ {211}\) This led Meshel and Goren to suggest that there might have been a lintel spanning the entryway. On the basis of this reconstruction

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\(^{210}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 28. Given that *Kajr4.3* was found *in situ* at a height of approximately 1.2m, it seems reasonable to infer that *Kajr4.1* was originally situated at a similar height.

they inferred that *Kajr*4.2 was originally located on the eastern face of the lintel above the doorway between the bench-room and the courtyard.\(^{212}\)

*Kajr*4.3—This was the only plaster text found *in situ*, approximately 1.2m above the floor level on the northern jamb of the doorway between the bench-room and the courtyard.\(^{213}\)

*Collection 2*

*Kajr*4.4—The fragments of *Kajr*4.4 were discovered in the entrance to the western storeroom, apparently having fallen from the lintel (cf. *Kajr*4.2).\(^{214}\)

*Kajr*4.5—Meshel and Goren included *Kajr*4.5 in their discussion of locus 104, at the base of the western stairs; however, elsewhere in the *editio princeps* the fragment is listed as coming from locus 101 (i.e. the western stairs).\(^{215}\) Meshel has subsequently confirmed locus 104 to be the find-spot.\(^{216}\) Consequently, Meshel and Goren suggested that the fragments might have come from the doorjamb leading into the western storeroom (cf. *Kajr*4.3).\(^{217}\)

*Kajr*4.6—These fragments were listed as coming from locus 101, near the entrance to the western storeroom, but more precise information regarding the location of *Kajr*4.6 is not available. Note that *Kajr*4.6 was not originally plotted on the published plans (fig.4.6).\(^{218}\)


\(^{213}\) Ibid, 22.

\(^{214}\) Ibid, 40; cf. the discussion on pp.46–47.

\(^{215}\) Ibid, 40, 119.

\(^{216}\) Ze’ev Meshel, email correspondence August 20\(^{th}\), 2014.

\(^{217}\) Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 40.

\(^{218}\) Ibid, 120.
4.9.2. The room

4.9.2.1. Collection 1: The Entrance to Building A

In spatial terms, the most significant feature of collection 1 is its location in and around the western doorway of the bench-room. If it is assumed that Kajr4.1–4.3 comprise a single functionally related unit (cf. §2.9), then this collection as a whole should properly be associated with the transitional space between the bench-room and courtyard, rather than the bench-room itself. This impression is reinforced by the fact that there is only one place in the whole of the bench-room from which all three texts could be seen; specifically, the northern end of the south-eastern bench. But from there the oblique angle would have made it impossible to read Kajr4.1 (note the backward angle of the north-western wall; cf. fig.4.6). Of course, it may also be that Kajr4.1 should be isolated from Kajr4.2 and 4.3 and treated independently, with the northern wing of the bench-room as the primary frame of reference. But, even so, the fact remains that Kajr4.3 was actually situated within the doorway, while Kajr4.2 was apparently written on the lintel, positioned in such a way as to be readily visible to someone passing through the vestibule between the two wings of the bench-room. As such, it may reasonably be inferred that Kajr4.2 and 4.3, at least, were probably connected to activities associated with passing through the entry-way.

But what was the nature of this association? Unfortunately the texts themselves are silent as to the reason for their placement, and it is necessary to proceed heuristically. This is necessarily a speculative undertaking, but it is possible to limit the degree of speculation by drawing comparisons, where possible, with analogous uses of writing in other contexts.

The first observation is, however, entirely pragmatic. That is, the placement of the inscriptions in the entrance has practical implications that must have necessarily affected any interaction with the KAPT. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the small size of the handwriting, only averaging about one centimetre in width per letter (see fig.4.7). This small
scale must have required a reader to stand remarkably close to the inscription in order to read the text. All the more so if the bench-room was roofed, as seems to have been the case (see §4.9.1), since the space would surely have been comparatively dark even during the daytime. However, given the location of Kajr4.2 and 4.3 in the only passage leading into Building A, it would have been impractical to pause and study the text; an inconvenience that could easily have been mitigated if the inscriptions were written on the adjacent walls in the manner of Kajr4.1.

This raises the question whether the inscriptions were intended for (semi)permanent residents or regular visitors who were familiar with the contents and signification of the texts, or whether they were intended to communicate previously unknown information to occasional visitors to the site. Unfortunately, the texts contain no clear indication of their intended audience(s). But, in either case, given their obscure placement, it seems that ease of reading was a secondary consideration; rather, it was apparently the semiotic or the material presence of the written word that was paramount. Consequently, any explanation of the KAPT must be able to account for their placement at the entrance to Building A without requiring that they be read. Several explanations satisfy these criteria. I will discuss each in turn.

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219 The comparative darkness would have been especially inhibiting immediately on entering from the outside. Depending on the amount and quality of ambient light, it might even have been necessary to use a lighted lamp, and two lamps were in fact found in the northern wing of the bench-room; but, there is no evidence connecting these to the inscriptions; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 28.

220 Nevertheless, the prominent placement of the texts suggests that they were visually significant.
In some ways the simplest explanation is that the texts were purely ornamental. This supposes an abstracted use of writing, in which individual graphemes and the written text as a whole are dissociated from their semantic functions in order to satisfy aesthetic sensibilities without imparting any deeper significance. But is this likely? Probably not. I am not aware of any comparable instance in which writing is used in this purely abstract sense. Writing is an inherently semiotic system, and even in Islamic artistic traditions which evince a remarkably developed use of calligraphy in architectural decoration, written ornamentation seems to have at least symbolic or connotative significance.²²¹

²²¹ See the example of inscribed minarets adduced in Oleg Grabar, “Graffiti or Proclamations: Why Write on Buildings?” in Oleg Grabar, Islamic art and beyond (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), 243.
Another explanation is that the inscriptions were graffiti. By graffiti I mean unsanctioned and opportunist ic writing, the meaning of which is not dependant on the function and use of the object or structure on which it is found. That is not to say, however, that the writing surface is insignificant. A hypothetical modern example will suffice to illustrate the point. A pair of lovers might carve their initials into a park bench; e.g. “A.B. loves C.D.”. In itself, this act neither adds to nor detracts from that bench’s function as a place to sit, but for the lovers who produced it the engraving is profoundly connected to the time and place. Moreover, the semi-permanence (or perceived permanence) of the writing surface is inherently connected to the role of the graffito as a memorialising activity. By carving their initials into the bench, the lovers are able, in some sense, to transcend the particular moment they wish to commemorate, and to communicate it to posterity.

Several interrelated qualities of graffiti may be particularly illuminating in regard to the KAPT:

First, graffiti is esoteric. In the example of the lover’s graffito, the denotative signification of the initials is unknown to the average passer-by, but to the initiated, who know the identities signified by the letters (i.e. the lovers), the graffito is deeply meaningful. Correspondingly, in the case of the KAPT, the choice of texts might have held special significance for the graffitist, but we should not necessarily expect this personal significance to be immediately obvious to an uninitiated audience.

Second, graffiti is polysemous. The lover’s graffito serves a dual role. On the one hand, it is a private communication between the lovers. On the other hand, it serves as a public proclamation of their love; albeit, one in which the identity of the lovers is encoded. Furthermore, to someone familiar with the custom, the graffito may evoke an amorous

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222 For other examples of pre-exilic Hebrew graffiti the Khirbet Beit Lei graffiti.
223 Grabar, “Graffiti or Proclamations”, 239–40.
experience of their own; while, to someone who is less romantically inclined, it may simply be seen as an act of vandalism. In the case of the KAPT, the act of writing is itself deeply symbolic. Even to an illiterate audience, writing connotes, among other things, a certain social standing (indicated, at a basic level, by the ability to participate in education). Further, given that for the most part writing would have only been encountered in official contexts (e.g. temple, market place, or military establishments), it is probable that the written word would generally have held deeply ingrained connotations of religious and administrative power and authority. However, if the KAPT were unauthorised graffiti, it might be preferable to view these connotations in terms of the subversion of authority (cf. the discussion of anti-language in §3.7).  

This also has implications at the level of the content. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see §1.3), the act of naming particular deities (e.g. YHWH of Teman Kajr4.1) or referencing certain folklore and motifs (e.g. Kajr4.2 and 4.3) has cultural significance that transcends the specific text. Depending on how one is situated in relation to the immanent tradition, such referentiality might be either inclusive or exclusive. That is, it might represent to the audience the degree to which they participate in the cultural continuum of the composer or performer, or it might demonstrate the degree to which they are removed from that culture. This emblematic or referential quality of graffiti leads to my next two points.

Third, graffiti is a form of self-identification. In other words, it is an intentional appropriation of the emblematic qualities just described in order to communicate participation in a particular social or cultural

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224 Consider, for example, the ritual curses written by the priest in Num 5:11–31; the military correspondence preserved in the Arad and Lachish ostraca, and the juridical petition recorded in the Mešad Hašāvyahu ostracon; or inscribed seal impressions or the inscribed lion weights from Nimrud. For a discussions contexts within which writing would have been encountered in daily life in ancient Israel, see Ian M. Young, “Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence: Part II”, VT (1998): 416–19.

tradition. Through the adoption of a certain aesthetic and vernacular the graffiti artist consciously aligns himself/herself with (or against) an ideological or social group.\(^{226}\) This is readily transparent in the case of political graffiti or the stylized calligraphy of modern street-art.\(^{227}\) In the case of the KAPT this relates to the use of the Phoenician script and Hebrew literary register (see Chapter 3). But the choice of text is also significant, and in this regard it is interesting to note the particularly Israelite character of both the theophany in *Kajr*4.2 and (potentially) the apparently mythopoetic *Kajr*4.3. It is not unreasonable to assume that these texts were selected specifically for their nationalistic implications as a form of self-identification: an implicit statement of ethnicity, or cultural alignment. This statement takes on special significance in the context of a remote settlement in the eastern Sinai desert.

Fourth, graffiti is spatializing. That is, graffiti is essentially a colonising activity that claims spaces and demarcates margins and borders.\(^{228}\) By writing on a wall the graffiti artistly asserts his/her right to be in that place.\(^{229}\) Once again, this might be both inclusive and exclusive.

What is striking about the last three qualities of graffiti is that they operate primarily at the level of connotation. The content of the inscription is important, but the signification of the text amounts to much more than the sum of the words. According to this explanation, the placement of the

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\(^{226}\) Compare Halliday, “Anti-Languages”, 570–84.


\(^{229}\) This quality even operates, in a relatively benign way, in the example of the lover’s initials, as the act of carving the initials into the bench is motivated by a desire to claim a specific time and place as particularly significant for the pair.
KAPT at the entrance may be understood as a visual declaration of identity and the right of the graffitist to be at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, either as a resident or a traveller passing through the site.\(^\text{230}\)

The KAPT as authorised spatial markers

A third explanation mirrors the spatializing and emblematic qualities of graffiti but extends them in the context of an authorised text. That is, the distinctively Israelite inscriptions might have been commissioned by the authorities at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud in order to signal the Israelite character of the settlement, or, more specifically, of the religious community postulated above. Especially significant in this regard are the theophany in *Kajr*4.2 and the references to YHWH of the Teman in *Kajr*4.1, which imply the theological legitimacy of the Israelite presence due to the immanence of the Israelite national god (see §2.8.2). In other words, by invoking the name of YHWH of the Teman, who, in the southern theophany tradition (i.e. *Kajr*4.2), is associated with the remote South, the writer claims divine protection and an imputed right to be in the region.

This explanation is inevitably bound to the geo-political context of the settlement. If the historical context discussed above is correct (see §4.7), then the recent military conquests formed the immediate background to the KAPT. In this regard, the possible reference to Cain/Kenites in *Kajr*4.3 is particularly intriguing. At one level, depending on how the text as a whole is reconstructed, this reference might be understood as either exclusive, asserting Israelite hegemony, or conciliatory, alluding to the primeval relationship and shared history of the two nations.\(^\text{231}\) However, these alternatives can be narrowed from an archaeological point of view. Given the complete lack of local Negev ware at the site, it seems that the Israelite presence was essentially exclusivist,

\(^{230}\) Again, there might be a subversive element here, but the evidence does not seem to require it (cf. §3.7).

rendering a conciliatory gesture unlikely. In this regard, it is perhaps no coincidence that the texts located around the main entrance seem to reference characteristically Israelite deities and traditions.

Importantly, it is not necessary to assume that local populations possessed the ability to read the inscriptions. Part of the inscription’s effectiveness might lie precisely in the fact that their denotative significance would be concealed from some (illiterate) viewers. By displaying access to hidden knowledge the writers tacitly assert their separation from those from whom that knowledge is concealed. Furthermore, according to the old adage that knowledge is power, hierarchical relationships are a basic correlate of such concealed knowledge. Conceivably, at both conscious and subconscious levels this inscrutability would further codify the us/them distinction implied by the indexicality of the texts’ contents; i.e. the inscription of characteristically Hebraic traditions. But allowance should also be made for the possibility that knowledge of the texts was disseminated by word of mouth. In this case, a suitable analogy is the Tell Dan stele, which was written in Aramaic and erected in newly conquered territory as a symbol of Aramean hegemony. The materiality of the stele (i.e. its medium, and location) is thus an important aspect of the symbol as a whole. Accordingly, at Kuntillet ’Ajrud, the act of writing collection 1 at the entrance to Building A co-opts the whole structure to this semiotic system, meaning that the texts and building should be viewed as an integrated whole and interpreted in terms of the semiotics of power.

232 Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ’Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 67. Of course, it is possible that the inhabitants differentiated between local communities, separating themselves from certain groups, but still wishing to be aligned with the Kenite group.

233 Note that these are not mutually exclusive possibilities. Even if reports of the inscriptions’ contents circulated more widely, it I reasonable to assume that details about their precise wording and contents would remain a mystery.
The internal division of space

A fourth possibility is that collection 1 was intended to demarcate the bench-room as separate from the rest of the complex; perhaps as some sort of sacred space? In this context it is interesting to recall that the closest biblical parallels for the theophany in Kajr4.2 are songs, some of which may have been sung in the liturgical setting of a temple context (see §2.8.3; cf. Kajr3.9 and the discussion of mantic hymns above). As such, the religious content of the texts might reflect activities that were conducted within the bench-room. A somewhat base analogy might be the erotic frescoes found in the brothels at Pompeii. In this regard, it is worth recalling the possible mural of a musician painted on the wall of the bench-lined annex to the east of the bench-room.

The KAPT as prayers

Yet another explanation, relating to the numinous power of writing, is that the inscriptions (either as graffiti or authorised texts) were prayers for wellbeing or protection (cf. §4.5). This explanation follows directly from the interpretation of Kajr4.1 as a blessing, and seems to have been presumed in much past scholarship.234 According to this explanation, the association of the southern theophany tradition with the motif of the divine warrior marching to succour his people (Kajr4.2) might have been intended as an invocation for divine protection. However, it is not easy to see how the narrative recorded in Kajr4.3 would correspond to this explanation.

The KAPT as apotropaic

Lastly, it is possible that the inscriptions of collection 1 had an apotropaic function. From the point of view of comparative anthropology, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the texts located near the entrance are to

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234 Again, it is worth noting that in The Context of Scripture, Kajr4.1 and 4.2 are included together with the pithoi inscriptions under the rubric “Votive Inscriptions” (cf. §2.9).
be associated directly with the passageway, since ethnographers and anthropologists have long stressed the ritual and conceptual importance of doorways and other transitional spaces.\(^{235}\) Thus, Arnold van Gennep, the seminal theorist on liminality and transitional rituals, famously observed: “The door is the boundary between the foreign and the domestic worlds in the case of the ordinary dwelling, between the profane and the sacred worlds in the case of the temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world”.\(^{236}\)

Although somewhat stark, this binary formulation posits a helpful analytical framework that has proved to be both remarkably versatile and remarkably enduring.\(^{237}\) That is, insofar as walls and doorways function to create and define physical space, they necessarily establish a dichotomy which is reflected in the conceptual categories: inside and outside; this side and that side. The boundary between spaces is not impermeable, however, and it is possible to pass from one to the other. The portals through which this boundary is traversed (i.e. doorways and windows) constitute an intermediate space (van Gennep’s liminal space) with its own particular dangers and vulnerabilities. As such, this liminal space is often felt to be in need of special protection, typically in the form of apotropaia, talismans, and rituals of inclusion and exclusion that are intended to assist in the


\(^{237}\) van Gennep’s liminality paradigm has been developed and applied to fields as diverse as social behaviour and urban planning; e.g. Quentin Stevens, “Betwixt and Between: Building Thresholds, Liminality and Public Space” in *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life* (eds. Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens; London: Routledge, 2007), 73–92; and the phenomenology of pain; e.g. Marja-Liisa Honkasalo, “Space and Embodied Experience: Rethinking the Body in Pain”, *Body & Society* 4 (1998): 35–57.

Strong evidence for the existence of a belief in the ritual significance of doorways in Iron Age Palestine is found in the aetiological tale in 1 Sam 5:1–5, which records the Philistine custom of not stepping on the threshold of the temple of Dagon in Ashdod. It appears that by the late pre-exilic period this superstition had come to be relatively widespread, as Zephaniah seems to reflect a similar practice of avoidance in his prophecy against כל־הדולג֯על־המפתן, “all the leapers on (or over) the threshold” (Zeph 1:9).\footnote{239 It is generally agreed that 1 Sam 5:1–5 forms the background to this verse, but there has been some debate as to whether Zeph 1:9 should be understood in terms of the adoption of Philistine customs in Judah, or of deliberate contravention by stepping on the threshold; see the discussion in O. Palmer Robertson, The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Wiliam B. Eerdmans, 1990), 277–78, and n.4. The confusion is compounded by the mixed textual witness. The LXX contains the variant reading: εκδικήσω επί πάντας εμφανώς επί τα πρόπυλα, “I will visibly punish all in (or upon) the gateway” (although, LXX\textsuperscript{B} omits επί πάντας; while codex Sinatucus has προπύλαι). In favour of the MT’s reading, however, is Tg. Jon.: כל המהלכים בנמותו פלשתים, “all who walk according to the customs of the Philistines”, which is clearly influenced by 1 Sam 5:5; and Vulg.: omnem qui arroganter ingreditur super limen, “all who arrogantly enter over the threshold”. The Syriac has the apparently interpretative variant: مفسرين "robbers and despoilers".} Further, the belief that the threshold represented a special place of danger seems to be hinted at by the metaphor: לפתח֯חטאת֯רבץ, “sin is crouching at the door (lit. opening)” (Gen 4:7); cf. the story of the Levite’s concubine in Judg 19:26–27, where the threshold (הסף) is a symbol of denied protection, and the liminal status of the concubine. Comparison
may also be drawn with the ceremony in which a slave could make his/her status permanent, by having his/her ear pierced at the door (Exod 21:6; Deut 15:17). The symbolism of this act is unclear, but it is probably significant that the ritual involved the slave coming permanently into the בית אמ.

More generally, it is possible to cite abundant evidence for the use of apotropaic devices at doorways throughout the ancient Near East. One of the most ubiquitous examples is the portrayal of hybrid creatures at city gates and the entrances of public and religious architecture (e.g. the lamassu gates from Nimrud). On a domestic scale, clay figurines were often deposited in liminal areas of Neo-Assyrian houses, including the space around doors and thresholds. And in Pharaonic Egypt there is

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240 Moreover, Exod 21:6 specifies that the slave is to be brought before God (והגישו אדניו אל-האלים), which might suggest that the ritual had a religious dimension. However, as Tigay noted, the omission of the phrase “before God” probably implies that in Deuteronomy the ceremony was entirely secular; cf. Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy דברים: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation (Philadelphia : Jewish Publication Society, 1996).


242 Carolyn Nakamura, “Dedicating Magic: Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figurines and the Protection of Assur”, World Archaeology 36 (2004): 11–25. Nakamura drew special attention to the fact that these deposits were buried, noting an ancient Mesopotamian world-view identifying the ground as the permeable barrier against malevolent chthonic
evidence that internal and external doors of domestic structures were often painted red, which seems to have had apotropaic significance.\textsuperscript{243} In a more specialised context, there is evidence for the placement of apotropaic images and figurines at the entrances to sick-rooms in Mesopotamia in order to protect infants from the child-snatching demon Lamaštu.\textsuperscript{244} And one Babylonian incantation, warding against an un-named malevolence that rises from under the bed, even addresses the door itself: “you, door and bolt, you must know: I now fall under the protection of (these) two (divine) lords [i.e. Ninurta and Marduk].”\textsuperscript{245}

By and large, the material evidence of apotropaia tends to be pictorial or sculpted, but the evidence of spoken rituals, such as the Babylonian incantation just cited, demonstrates that safeguards associated with the doorway were not limited to iconographic representations alone.\textsuperscript{246} In fact, there is also evidence that the written word was felt to be potent and effective for protection. For this we may adduce the two


\textsuperscript{244} Trans. Frans A. M. Wiggermann, in Stol and Wiggermann, \textit{Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: its Mediterranean Setting} (Cuneiform Monographs 14; Groningen: Styx, 2000), 239.

\textsuperscript{245} Trans. Frans A. M. Wiggermann, in Stol and Wiggermann, \textit{Birth in Babylonia and the Bible}, 246.

engraved plaques from Arslan Tash, which bear incantation texts accompanied by apparently apotropaic images, including a winged sphinx. The upper-edges of both plaques are pierced, apparently so that they could be hung, and although it is by no means certain that they were to be situated at the doorway, the incantations seem to be primarily concerned with protection of the house from demonic intrusion (note especially the references to הַיָּד “door” and אֹסַף “doorframes” in the text covering the image of the deity on tablet 1). Significantly, these tablets were inscribed on every available surface, including the top, base, and sides, and even covering the iconographic designs, which suggests that the writing itself was felt to have an important role in protecting against danger.

Within the Hebrew tradition, the inscribed doorframe at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud invites comparison with Deut 6:6–9 (paralleled in Deut 11:18–20):
Attempts have been made to draw parallels between these verses and the plaques from Arslan Tash. But, it is not self-evident that the injunction in Deut 6:6–9 and 11:18–20 had apotropaic intent. In fact, inner-biblical tradition apparently saw the imagery as figurative: cf. Prov 6:20–22: 20

"When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down they will guard you; and when you wake they will preoccupy you" (cf. Prov 1:8–9; Isa 44:5). 252

To be sure, Deut 6:6–9 and 11:18–20 are the basis for the ancient custom of attaching a *mezuzah* to the doorframes of Jewish homes, and in some modern Jewish circles there is a belief that the mezuzah itself has mechanistic potency as a deterrent against evil. 254 Certainly, by the

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252 For a fuller discussion of the relationship between these verses, see Cohn, *Tangled Up in Text*, 46–48.

253 A container in which there is a scroll bearing the words of Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21.

medieval period the protective function of the *mezuzah* appears to have been generally accepted, and there is some evidence that this belief also featured relatively widely in earlier rabbinic thought. However, there is no evidence for the antecedents of this understanding in the biblical period. Indeed, in the Deuteronomic injunction, the use of the anaphoric pronoun אֶלְהָּ to identify the inscription’s contents as *הָרְשֵׁי אֲלֵהָּ הָיָה,* “these words that I command you today” (Deut 6:6; 11:18), rather suggests that the texts were primarily intended as a reminder (for the Israelites) of the Deuteronomic Law. Moreover, in Deut 11:21–28 the contingent blessings are explicitly said to stem from faithful observance (שֵׁם; 11:22) of the commandments (מצות; 11:22), rather than any inherent or mechanistic potency of the written word.

Further still, the memorialising or mnemonic intention behind the verses seems to be confirmed by the description of the words as an אות, “sign”. Significantly, in the Pentateuch the noun אות regularly denotes a symbol serving as a reminder for the Israelites of their covenant relationship with God (e.g. Gen 9:12, 13, 17; 17:11; Exod 3:12; 13:9,

258 In fact, the Hebrew employs an emphatic construction consisting of an infinitive absolute followed by an imperfect verb, leaving no doubt that it is obedience that is at issue: כי אם שמר אָלֶיהָ וְשְׁמֵיהָ יַעֲשֶׂה הָאֲלֵהָּ הָיָה, “if you diligently obey all these commands” (Deut 11:22). Admittedly, there is an inherent ambiguity in the expression, as “these words” (Deut 6:6; 11:22) may be interpreted cataphorically to refer to the injunction itself, or anaphorically, referring to the Mosaic law more broadly; however, the wider context seems to suggest that it is the latter that is intended (see esp. Deut 11:31).
259 Interestingly, b. Menah. 43b draws an equivalence between circumcision and the Mezuzah; however, as this passage predicated on the protective power of each, it is
However, the evidence is complex. The Deuteronomic expression: "you shall bind it as a sign upon your hand and as a frontlet between your eyes" (Deut 6:8; 11:18) is paralleled in Exod 13:16 "and it shall be as a sign upon your hands and as a frontlet between your eyes". A slight (but significant) variation of this same expression also occurs in Exod 13:9, “and it shall be for you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder between your eyes” (cf. Isa 57:8 where זכרון is again used of a memorial seemingly associated with the doorway מזוזה).

Neither verse in Exodus relates the אות to the written word. Rather, in both verses the sign is connected to ritual performances, commemorating God’s saving works in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt (cf. Exod 13:6–8, 12–14). Moreover, Exod 13:9 includes the (probable) interpolation that the sign is to serve as a memorial (זכרון) for the Israelites themselves (לך; dativus commodi, lit. “for you”). Nevertheless, in Exod 13:12–15 the context is the redemption of the firstborn among the Israelites, which is explicitly linked to the death of the firstborn in Egypt (Exod 12:1–32), and, by extension, to the blood of the Passover lamb, which was spread on the doorframes (מזוזת) of the houses of the Israelites (Exod 12:21–23). Significantly, in Exod 12:13 this blood is likewise described as a sign (אות): "and the blood shall be for you as a sign upon the houses where you are”, and, consequently, Deut 6:6–9; 11:18–20, and Exod 12:1–32 are tethered by a linguistic thread (which also runs through Exodus 13), centred on the אות.

unclear whether the equivalence rests on the fact that both are described as signs (אות; Gen 17:11), or whether it rests on the apparently apotropaic circumcision rite in Exod 4:25.

Cf. Exod 4:8, 9, 17, 28, 30; 7:3; 10:1; Deut 4:38; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 26:8, 46, where אות is a sign of God’s power and deliverance.

I am indebted to Stephen Llewelyn for Isaiah reference.
The relationship between these verses was not lost on later rabbinic commentators. One midrash in the *Mekilta*, tractate Pisha 11, explicitly draws an analogy between the injunction of Deuteronomy and the blood of the Passover lamb, stating: “if it is said of the blood of the paschal sacrifice in Egypt, the less important … ‘he will not permit the destroyer (to enter)’; how much more so will the mezuzah, the more important … not permit the destroyer (to enter)”.

However, as this is a *kal v’chomer* (*a fortiori*) argument, based on the potency and frequency of the divine name in specific pericopae (vis. Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21), it is not certain that the premise can be extended to collection 1 (notwithstanding a relatively high proportion of DNN).

Furthermore, a certain ambiguity also surrounds the biblical description of the paschal sacrifice itself. To be sure, Exod 12:13b and 12:23 seem to imply that God (or the “destroyer”) is repulsed by the blood; however, the verses do not explicitly attribute any mechanistic efficacy to the blood. Rather, in both verses the sparing of the Israelite houses is attributed to God’s seeing (√) the blood at the door, and seems to assume some sort of volitional agency (וַלֹּא יָתֵן הַמְשָחֵית לָבָא, “and

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262 In full, the text reads: והשם אנס הפסח מפורזת כהל שארית אלא לשעה ארבעת יוממות ביום בלילה בלתי נוגע לדורות ואמר לואים ואמר להReadWrite וכתוב בימי יום וليل שתהיה שמירתו של ישראל ומזהה במצודה ששם בתשע שמטות שמירה שמה בלילות, וכתבה לדורות ועליהן אמר להם ולויתנה בשלום זה לא מספה כן焕发 אמרו שמה בｴרペットל, "what! if it is said of the blood of the paschal sacrifice in Egypt, the less important—since it was not prescribed for day and for night, and was not to be observed in subsequent generations—‘he will not permit the destroyer (to enter)’; how much more will the *Mezuzah*, the more important—since it contains the name of God ten times, and was prescribed for day and night and for all generations—not permit the destroyer (to enter)”; Hebrew based on Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael* (JPS Classic Reissues; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 61–62.

263 The tetragrammaton occurs three times in *Karj*4.1, and El (x2) and possibly Baal are attested in *Kajr*4.2. No DNN are preserved in the extant fragment of *Kajr*4.3. Note also that there is no real evidence that in the biblical period the tetragrammaton was felt to have the sort of numinous power assumed by the *Mekilta*; cf. Steven Ortlepp, *Pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton: A Historico-Linguistic Approach* (lulu.com, 2011), 38–39.
he (God) *will not permit* [qal] the destroyer to enter” 12:23). Moreover, in Exod 12:13a the sign (יהוה) of the blood is again specified by the *dativus commodi* as being for the benefit of the Israelites themselves, suggesting that the blood had a symbolic (mnemonic) if not an affective (apotropaic) purpose. Admittedly, it is possible that this reflects an historicising or demythologising tendenz. But, even so, these considerations warrant caution when ascribing an apotropaic function to the KAPT, especially because we cannot know where the writers Kuntillet 'Ajrud stood in relation to the postulated demythologisation process.

So, what are the implications for Kuntillet 'Ajrud? On the one hand, the possibility that Deut 6:6–9 and 11:18–20 served a mnemonic purpose means we cannot simply assume that collection 1 was placed near the doorway for apotropaic reasons. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the parallel between collection 1 and Deut 6:9 and 11:20 is ultimately superficial, stemming principally from the similar location of each. Yet there are also important differences between the two.

As has already been noted, Deut 6:9 and 11:20 seem to relate specially to the Deuteronomic Law (cf. the instruction in Prov 6:20–22),

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264 William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 43–49, has reached much the same conclusion. As Gilders seems to recognize, the agreement of these verses as to the role of the blood is all the more significant due to the fact that it bridges the customary source-critical divisions of the text.

265 The enigmatic tale about the circumcision of Moses and Zipporah’s son (Exod 4:24–26), may be adduced as indirect evidence for a belief in the inherent apotropaic power of blood. For a detailed discussion of this difficult passage see Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus* (Old Testament Library; London: SCM, 1974), 95–101. It is, furthermore, interesting to note that Tg. Neof. and a fragmentary targum introduce the לָעָשׁלָי, “destroyer” as a character in Exod 4:25, the same noun as is used to translate מַשַּחַית in Exod 12:23, implying that in later Jewish exegetical tradition these events were understood to be related; cf. the discussion of the reception history of Exod 4:25 in Geza Vermes, “Baptism and Jewish Exegesis: New Light from Ancient Sources“, *NTS* 4 (1958): 308–19.

266 I am indebted to Stephen Llewelyn for this suggestion.
but at Kuntillet ’Ajrud this is not the case. The fragmentary nature of Kajr4.1 and 4.3 means it is impossible to be certain about their contents, but when we turn to the poetic theophany in Kajr4.2 we are on surer ground. In fact, as has already been discussed (see §2.8.3), comparisons with similar biblical theophanies suggest a relationship with hymnic traditions, extolling God’s protection of his people. This might hold a clue for the interpretation of Kajr4.2. Could the text have been associated with a ritual for passing through the entrance? If so, then the material text may be compared with the engraved blessings discussed in Chapter 2 (Kajr1.1–1.4; cf. Appendix B), insofar as it stands perpetually in lieu of the ritual performer. This may be extended, and some sort of apotropaic function inferred. We will return to the possible nature and motivation of this apotropaic precaution below (see §2.9.3), but first let us consider collection 2.

4.9.2.2. Collection 2: The western stairs

In some ways the interpretation of collection 2 is both simpler and more complex than the interpretation of collection 1. It is simpler because, here, at the western end of Building A, we need not be directly concerned with the interpretation of the bench-room. But it is complicated by an even greater degree of uncertainty regarding the texts’ contents and placement. Furthermore, it is not immediately clear whether we should seek a single explanatory principle that could account for both collections, or whether the two collections were inscribed for different reasons (note the use of different coloured inks for each collection).

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267 There is comparative evidence from Mesopotamia for spoken rituals associated with passage through entrances; cf. Ragavan, “Entering Other Worlds”, 201–21. It is also tempting to speculate whether a similar custom might be reflected in Psalm 100:4. Interestingly, Deut 6:9 and 11:20 are also framed by references to oral recitation associated with passage between spaces and postures; cf. Niditch, Oral World and Written Word99–100; Carr, Writing on the Tablet of the Heart, 135–36.
As a preliminary consideration, it may be observed that collection 2 was located in the vicinity of the western stairs. At first glance, this might suggest that the texts were associated with activities conducted on the second storey or rooftop. This might support the view that the purpose of the KAPT was related to the internal division of space, as discussed above. However, based on the descriptions published by the excavators, it seems that the texts actually framed the entrance to the western storeroom at the foot of the stairs, rather than the stairway itself (cf. §4.9.1). In this instance, then, it seems that collection 2 might have been spatializing or ornamental, but it is a priori unlikely that the texts were apotropaic. After all, why would a storeroom, which has no other signs of being unusual, need special protection? This might lend support to the possibility that the placement of the texts was secondary and opportunistic; i.e. taking advantage of an existing plaster surface. This, in turn, would seem to

268 Note that the profusion of storage vessel fragments in this room—including a number with their bases in situ—is comparable to the southern storeroom, and, as such, it is reasonable to infer that this room was primarily used for storage; cf. Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 47, 48–49.

269 The entrance to the north-western corner-room was also coated with plaster, and in this room the excavators unearthed a number of unusual artefacts, including several worked stones that were tentatively identified as massebot. This led Meshel and Goren to ask whether the room was perhaps a kind of store for special artefacts; Meshel, Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 45. This may well be so, but the there is no indication that the plaster at the entrance to the north-western corner-room was inscribed, and the western storeroom does not admit access to the corner-room. Consequently, there is no indication that texts were directly associated with the special artefacts. Moreover, several of the vessels in the western storeroom were imbedded in the floor, suggesting that storage was the primary function of the room. These included three of the vessels with the incised 'alep (Kajr2.16–18), which, according to one interpretation, may suggest that the room was used for the storage of offerings (cf. §2.3); however, more of the same (Kajr2.13–15) were also discovered in the southern storeroom, which was not adorned with plaster or wall inscriptions.
indicate that the use of gypsum plaster was essentially pragmatic—at least at the western end of the complex.  

4.9.3. *The building complex*

When entering Building A through the bent-axis gate (i.e. the only entrance), a visitor would immediately have seen *Kajr* 4.2 (the theophany) on the internal lintel. Now, if collection 1 did in fact serve an apotropaic purpose, this interior location is remarkable. Rather than the interior walls of the bench-room, we would naturally expect an apotropaic device—designed to prevent malevolent forces from entering the building—to be located on an external surface. Moreover, the position of collection 1 on the internal walls was clearly not a simple matter of expediency—based on the location of existing plastered surfaces—as the scribe could equally have written the text on one of the plastered surfaces of the bent-axis gate; or, if the texts were intended to separate the sacred space of the bench-room from the courtyard, on the west facing surface of the lintel (see above).

This poses a problem for the apotropaic explanation, but it is not insurmountable, since it is possible that the texts were in fact intended to protect the domestic spaces surrounding the courtyard of Building A, rather than the bench-room itself. However, this begs the question why the bench-room was not felt to be in need of similar protection. An alternative possibility is that collection 1 was intended as a prophylactic against the so-called *sancta contagion*; that is, the belief that sanctification (or defilement) is communicated by contact with the divine presence, sometimes with lethal consequences (e.g. Exod 19:12; 30:20; 2 Sam 271

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270 I is unclear whether the whole of the western wall was plastered, or only the doorframes (see §4.9.1). If the former, then use of the plaster might have been connected to heat regulation, as discussed above (§4.9.1). If the latter, then the whitened doorframes might have been intended to reflect light into the storerooms (cf. §7.6.1).

271 That is, if the food preparation areas and the probable second storey that framed the courtyard are related to domestic activities.
In other words, it might be that collection 1 was intended to demarcate and separate the sacred spaces at the eastern end of the complex (corresponding to the plastered surfaces of Building B and the gate complex of Building A), creating a metaphysical barrier between them and the living areas at the western end of Building A (i.e. the courtyard and surrounding rooms). In that case, the purpose of collection 1 would have been to repel the sanctifying presence in order to prevent it from permeating the profane spaces of the complex and rendering them uninhabitable. An analogous situation is apparently implied by Ezekiel 44:19 (cf. 42:14):

And when [the priests] go out into the outer court to the people, they shall remove the garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the sanctified rooms; and they shall put on other garments, so that they do not sanctify (lit. make holy) the people by their garments.

Due to the concentration of reflective plastered surfaces at the eastern end of the complex, and the prominence of solar imagery in the southern theophany tradition, it could be conjectured that the sancta contagion might have been related to the rays of the rising sun. If so, then the apotropaic explanation may also be extended to collection 2: given that the entrance to the western storeroom is east facing, and assuming that the room was used for the storage of food or other ordinary objects, the plastered surfaces might have been intended as an additional level of protection as the rising sun crept over the walls at the eastern end of the complex. It could be objected that there is no evidence of comparable

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protection around the entrances to the southern storeroom, but it should be noted that the openings in the southern part of the complex are north facing, and so would not have allowed direct sunlight to permeate.

The concentration of plaster on the east facing surfaces is suggestive, but it is hardly conclusive. Moreover, it should also be noted that the plastered surfaces might have had different functions and associations at different times. In other words, the application of plaster might initially have been pragmatic or aesthetic, and developed an apotropaic association at a later stage. Accordingly, the placement of these texts at the entrance also makes sense if they were authorised texts, intended to promote ethnic or cultural self-identification (see above); a clear and unmistakable sign to anyone entering the building that they were in an area controlled by the kingdom of Israel. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the most clearly culturally aligned texts were located at the main entrance. Owing to their impractical position, however, it is likely that collection 1 was primarily symbolic and mnemonic rather denotative—this assumes that the intended audience would be familiar with their contents (see above). In this case, the inscriptions of collection 2, at the western end of the courtyard, are less easily explained. Perhaps, they were simply a form of artistic self-expression (cf. the dipinto on the doorjamb of the southern storeroom) drawing inspiration from the life and activities of the community; hence the transcription of a song (Kajr.3.9) onto Pithos B, and the possible reference to the prophet in (Kajr.4.5).

4.9.4. The total excavated area

The question remains as to how all of this relates to Building B. As noted above, it is almost impossible to reconstruct the outline and function of Building B; however, its location at the entrance to the site, and the fact that the northern wing was decorated with elaborate murals suggests that it
was of some importance. Moreover, it was here that the possible bamah was located. Furthermore, it seems likely that Building B should be related to the reconfiguring of the site in Phase 3. Whether intentionally or not, the fact that the gypsum plaster was applied to the surfaces at the eastern end of Building A and to the surfaces of Building B creates a visual and conceptual continuity between the two spaces, suggesting that activities conducted in the bench-room were related in some way to the activities conducted in Building B. Nevertheless, the material remains suggest that there were functional differences between the two structures. In particular, it should be noted that, unlike Building A, Building B was almost entirely devoid of artefacts. This may simply reflect the severe erosion and poor state of repair of these building remains, but it is noteworthy nonetheless. Any attempt to reconstruct the use of this space would be pure speculation: perhaps Building B was an open air shrine used in solar worship (for the sorts of activities this might have involved see the processional on Pithos B; cf. Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 23:5, 11; Jer 8:2; Ezek 8:16–17). In that case, the bench-room may have served as a place for the conjectured prophets to sit and receive a vision (cf. §7.7).

4.10. CONCLUSIONS

Ultimately, any attempt to define the relationship between the KAPT and their physical context requires a degree conjecture. Consequently, while it is possible to draw a number of empirical observations from the archaeology, many of the conclusions that follow are provisional.

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273 Cf. Meshel, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 13. The location of Building B to the east of Building A means that anyone approaching Building A would have to pass between the two wings of Building B.

274 Whether this was always the intention as argued by the excavators, or whether it was a secondary re-configuring of the space makes little difference, the fact remains that the structure should probably be related to Phase 3 and the construction of the bench-room.

275 Note the possible depiction of a seated musician at the entrance (cf. the seated lyre player on Pithos B).
Beginning on the surer ground of empirical observation, it may be observed that the awkward position and small lettering of collection 1 suggests that their function was primarily visual and symbolic. In other words, they were impressionistic, designed to be viewed rather than read. Moreover, the position of *Kajr*4.2 and 4.3 immediately in the interior doorway means collection 1 was probably related to the entryway rather than the bench-room. Clearly their impact was meant to be felt immediately on entering Building A.

By comparison, the location of collection 2 is more enigmatic. This collection was aligned on the same axis as collection 1 at the main entrance, but the texts apparently framed the doorway to an otherwise unremarkable storeroom. This might suggest that their *raison d'être* was fairly prosaic.

Turning to matters of inference, the location of collection 1 at the entrance to Building A is compatible with at least two alternatives. On the one hand, the theophany (*Kajr*4.2), the references to YHWH of (the) Teman (*Kajr*3.9, and 4.1), and the orientation of the site toward the east, might suggest that the religious activities of the community included some sort of solar cult. In keeping with this, the location of both collections might be interpreted as relating to an apotropaic function, acting against the so-called *sancta contagion*, as the rising sun—symbolising the Yahwistic theophany—rose over the walls of the compound. On the other hand, the presence of traditional texts indexically related to Israelite ethnic and religious traditions might have had a political function, intended to signal the identity and theological legitimacy of the Israelite settlers at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. In this case, the text selection may have simultaneously served two purposes: an exclusive one, relating to the separation and segregation of the local nomadic communities, and an inclusive one, giving expression to

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276 Of course, the contents of the inscriptions might have a bearing on the interpretation of the space; note the possible reference to a prophet that framed the entrance to the room. But the fragmentary condition of the texts and the nature of the room’s contents preclude judgements in this matter.
the Israelite settlers’ right to be in that place. In this regard, the principal function of the KAPT was ornamental, or memorialising, but in the emblematic sense discussed in Chapter 1.

While either explanation is plausible, the political motivation is perhaps preferable on the basis of its capacity to explain the text selection collectively. That is, according to this explanation it is possible to interpret *Kajr*4.1 and 4.2 (and perhaps *Kajr*4.3) as signalling the divinely sanctioned right of the community to inhabit the space. This is consistent with the fact that no local pottery types were found among the ceramic assemblage, suggesting that the settlers had little or no commercial contact with the surrounding peoples.

In a more general sense it might be supposed that the texts were more or less related to activities conducted at the site. These may have been chiefly prophetic—e.g. the reference to the prophet (*Kajr*4.5), and possible preparatory hymns (*Kajr*4.2 and 3.9). In this case, collection 2 is perhaps best viewed as a form of creative self-expression (i.e. writing for writing’s sake) drawing inspiration from the daily activities of the community.

It should be noted, however, that both explanations are not mutually exclusive. In other words, the KAPT might have been politically motivated and at the same time served an apotropaic function; although, if so, it seems reasonable to assume that one of these was a secondary association.

Finally, both explanations could be explained as either graffiti or an authorised text, but in either case, given the prominent position of the KAPT (esp. collection 1) and the correlation between the plaster texts and the Pithoi inscriptions (e.g. the references to *YHWH* of (the) Teman *Kajr*3.6, 3.9, 4.1; together with the possible inclusion of hymnic material on both *Kajr*3.9 and 4.2; and the possible depiction of musical and worship activities in both media) it may safely be assumed that the KAPT were representative of the activities conducted by, and the ideology of, the Phase 3 community as a whole.
PART TWO

——DEIR ‘ALLA——
Chapter 5

EPIGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE DEIR ʿALLA INSCRIPTIONS

The editio princeps of the DAPT was published in 1976 by Jacob Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij.\(^1\) The editors were able to reconstruct two principal groups or “Combinations” along with several smaller combinations of fragments. Important refinements to the alignment of specific fragments were subsequently proposed by André Caquot and André Lemaire, Émile Puech, and Edward Lipiński (see below).

Notwithstanding the remarkable achievements in the restoration and interpretation the DAPT, the interpretation of both combinations is complicated by substantial lacunae and uncertainty regarding elements of vocabulary and imagery. Consequently, in many instances commentators have found it necessary to draw widely from the pool of comparative Semitic languages and literature, citing parallels from sources as late as Syriac and Classical Arabic. Ultimately, the validity of this method may be judged on its capacity to restore a coherent interpretation of the text.

In accordance with the convention established by the editio princeps, the following designations are used: a large Roman numeral followed by a Hindu-Arabic numeral indicates combination and line number (e.g. I.1 = Combination I, line 1); a small Roman numeral followed by a letter in brackets indicates the fragment number (e.g. iii(d)). The discussion below is limited to I.1–16 and II.1–17, from which reasonably coherent sequences can be restored.

\(^1\) Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla.
5.1. THE DEIR ‘ALLA PLASTER TEXTS

5.1.1. COMBINATION I

Fig. 5.1—Combination I
EIR

Epigraphic Analysis of the Deir 'Alla Inscriptions

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*shaded areas represent the rubrics written in red ink (see below)
1. […] the account of [Balaam, son of Beor], a man who is/was a seer of the gods. The gods came to him at night [and] revealed (lit. uncovered) to him according to the pronouncement of El. [And] they said to [Balaam], son of Beor, “Thus will (El) do, according to the bird omen(?). Each will see that which you have heard”.

2. And Balaam arose before morning […] right hand […] and could not eat and he wept bitterly. And his people went up to him, and they said to Balaam, son of Beor, “Do you fast? Do you weep? And he said to them, “Sit down! I will reveal to you what the šaddayīn have done(?). Now, come! See the deeds of the gods! The gods gathered and the šaddayīn took their place in the council, and they said to Š[…] “sew shut the heavens with your cloud! Let there be darkness and not brightness, gloom and not heat(?), in order that you might induce terror and much darkness, but do not be angry forever! For the oriole(?) has reproached the Griffon Vulture(?) and the clutch of the Egyptian Vulture(?); the ostrich had compassion on the young of the hawk(?), but harmed the chicks of the heron(?). The swallow tore at the dove and the sparrow(?) with its beak […] and […] the staff; when ewes lead, it is the rod that is led. Hares ate Flitter-mice were filled [with bee]r; [bat]s got drunk (with) wine (?). Hyenas heeded instruction; the cubs of the fl[ox…] multitudes walked […] laughed at the wise. The poor woman(?) mixed myrrh, and the priestess […] to the one who wears a girdle of threads(?). The esteemed esteems and the esteeemer is

2 Or, “one who sees the gods”.
13. es[teemed...] the deaf hear from afar
14. [...] and all (fore)see(?) the restriction of procreation and fertility I-
15. [...] to the leopard. The piglet chased the young
16. [of...]³

*Line 1*

—Three sections of the DAPT are written in red ink: the first half of I.1, the second half of I.2 and the first half of II.17. As has long been recognised, the red ink appears to be analogous to the use of rubrics in the Egyptian scribal tradition.⁴ As such, the red sections probably indicate some sort of heading, marking key points in the text. The first (I.1) contains the heading of the entire text, comparable to the superscriptions of biblical prophetic books (see below); the second (I.2) apparently included a summary of the god’s revelation, corresponding to the first instance of divine speech; and the third (II.17) describes the purpose of Balaam’s account, and perhaps the function of the DAPT itself.⁵

[...]—The lacuna at the beginning of the line allows for approximately three or four letters. Émile Puech proposed that this space might be filled with iii(f), bearing traces of yôd, sāmek and rêš written in red ink.

³ I.16 is so badly damaged that no sense can be made of it.
⁵ Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla*, 184, who interpret the rubrics as follows: I.1 = the title of the piece; I.2 = the first clauses of direct discourse; II.17 = the beginning of the response by Balaam’s hearers; compare Stephen A. Kaufman, review of J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla*, *BASOR* 239, (1980): 73, who suggested that the red section in the second line marks the divine speech.
and iii(d), with a yôd written in red ink.\(^6\) The resulting restoration, יִסְרָאֵל, “warnings, admonitions of…” is plausible and has met with some acceptance.\(^7\) However, it should be noted that there are no physical joins to confirm the placement of the fragments.

Traces of a rês and another long-legged letter (either kāp, mêm, pê, or tāw) written in red ink, are visible at the top of i(c). The reading ספר was first proposed by André Caquot and André Lemaire,\(^8\) and greatly strengthened by Jo Ann Hackett,\(^9\) who, following


a suggestion by Gordon Hamilton, proposed that iii(h) be placed at the top of i(c), to restore the tops of pê and šin. Physically, these fragments appear to fit well, and, with some reservation, Gerrit van der Kooij has also offered his support for this restoration.10

is generally understood to refer to a written document, either the Vorlage (see below) or the DAPT itself. However, it is also possible that refers to an oral dream report (cf. Gen 37:9, 10; 40:8, 9; 41:8, 12), which was subsequently transcribed (see further the discussion on II.17).

The superscription, “account of PN,” is paralleled in Nahum 1:1, משא הנוהי ספר חזון נחום האלקשי, “A pronouncement concerning Nineveh. The account of the vision of Nahum the Elqoshite.” 11 Note the generally high degree of coincidence between the superscription in Nahum 1 and the DAPT I.1–2: ספר (I.1); חז (I.1); משא (I.2).

An alternative possibility is to follow the earlier suggestion of P. Kyle McCarter Jr. and restore אמרי.12 Stephen Russell argued that this noun is paralleled in the biblical Balaam pericope (Num 24:4, 16), where it is apparently used with the technical sense “(oracular) utterance”;

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Amitai; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in cooperation with the American Schools of Oriental Research, 1985), 316.


however, there pertains to divine speech, while the noun נאם is used of the prophetic utterance.\textsuperscript{13}

The restoration of the PN is supported by I.4, where it is written in full (for a discussion of the role and characterisation of Balaam, see Appendix D).

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Stephen C. Russell, \textit{Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature}, 130, n.81. Russell observes that the expression אמריּסקר֯בלעם֯בר֯בער would, then, parallel דבריּעמוס (Amos 1:1), and דבריּירמיהו (Jer 1:1).


\textsuperscript{15} The same is true of Biblical Hebrew; cf. Huehnergard, “Relative Particles”, 363–64. Although, note that if Phoenician נשא is derived from נשא as discussed by Huehnergard, then the DAPT might reflect an intermediate stage, before the reš had fully elided.
In either case, אִם may be treated as a copula completing the relative clause.\textsuperscript{16} Hackett was able to adduce several examples in which the 3.m.s. copula follows the relative pronoun אשר. However, this is comparatively rare, which might indicate that the common noun איש is the preferable translation of איש; cf. the expression איש האלים הוא, “the man of God is he” (1 Kgs 13:26).

Noting that the red ink of the rubric ceases after אלהים, McCarter preferred to read איש as the beginning of a new clause; either as the exclamatory particle “lo! behold!”\textsuperscript{17} or else as a casus pendens, “as for him” (as proposed in the editio princeps).\textsuperscript{18} However, as Jonas Greenfield observed, the interpretation of איש as an exclamatory particle would produce a syntactic structure for which there is no known parallel.\textsuperscript{19}

In any case, the change from red to black ink is not necessarily indicative of the syntax of the line. Following Gordon Hamilton, Jo Ann Hackett suggested that the change of colours is determined by the middle of the line, rather than the semantic content of the inscription.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{18} Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 185; cf. Puech, “Balaʿam and Deir ʿAlla”, 30.


Interestingly, there is also evidence that Egyptian scribes did not always feel compelled to make their rubrics conform strictly to the syntax of the text. For example, in a study of two Middle Kingdom literary papyri copied by the same scribe, Richard B. Parkinson observed the scribe’s tendency to revert to black ink at the beginning of a new line, even if the semantic content of the rubricised section continued across the line.²¹

The substantive חזה “seer” is well known from Hebrew and Aramaic sources.²² Hackett analysed the form as a G-stem active participle, noting that the ħê m.l. indicates the contraction of the original *-iy ending (׃ן).²³

Lemaire drew special attention to the use of חזה, “seers,” in the Aramaic Zakkur inscription, stressing the possible Aramaic affiliation of the DAPT.²⁴ But Hackett, citing Robert Wilson’s careful sociological study of prophecy in ancient Israel, argued that the pairing of חזה and משא is well attested in the southern (Judahite) biblical tradition, and insisted

²¹ Richard B. Parkinson, *Reading Ancient Egyptian Poetry: Among Other Histories* (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 95–96, 102–03. The careful use of rubrics was clearly a matter of some concern for this scribe as in another place they apparently intentionally left the last line of the page short in order to begin the following rubric at the beginning of the next page. The papyri contained editions of *The Tale of Sinuhe* and *The Eloquent Peasant*, respectively.


²³ Hackett, *The Balaam Text From Deir ʿAllā*, 31; in this she was followed by Ahituv, *Echoes From the Past*, 316.

that the DAPT should be read with reference to a wider southern Levantine context.  


son, and the prophecy of the man whose eye is open” (Num 24:3, 15). However, this verb is otherwise unparalled, and textual corruption has been suspected (cf. BDB; HALOT). Consequently, שְּתֻם in Num 24:3, 15 has been compared to the more common verb סָתָם, “to close” (cf. שָּתַם, Lam 3:8). Intriguingly, in a later context in Ezekiel 28:3 and Daniel 8:26; 12:4 סָתָם is used of concealed knowledge, and in this sense, the expression, “the man who closes the eye”, might be semantically consonant with the characterisation of Balaam as a dream interpreter (cf. §D.1). Accordingly, בֵּיתוֹ of אלהים might be understood to mean that the אלהים induced a visionary state in the prophet. Be that as it may, the suggestion remains tenuous.

Others have restored a simple verb of address. Thus, Manfred Weippert restored רָאָם, balancing in the following line, while André Lemaire, restored רָאָה, and Choon-Leong Seow restored וַיַּחְדֶּשֶׁר (cf. דבר in II.17). The proposals of Lipiński and Weippert are both consistent with Puech’s proposed placement of xv(b), bearing traces in black ink of a long-legged letter above another letter in red ink, at the end of the line. Alternatively, Hackett, following Hamilton, placed וַיַּאֲמַר in II.17. However, as Manfred Weippert notes,
this placement is rendered highly unlikely by the traces of ink visible along the upper edge of ν(e).\(^{32}\)

**Line 2**

אשכמ—Hoftijzer originally proposed the restoration א캡, which he interpreted as a plural form of Heb. שכם, “mountain ridge” (lit. “shoulder”); for the sense, cf. Gen 48:22; Josh 15:8, 10, 11; 18:12, 13, 16, 18, 19), with emphatic ’ālep.\(^{33}\) The letters wāw, bêt, šîn were based on the original placement of i(c) at the end of line 3. However, following the re-arrangement of the fragments by Caquot and Lemaire (see רפס above), this restoration can no longer be accepted—there is no corresponding šîn at the end of line 1, and the reading “mountainous regions”\(^{34}\) makes no sense in the context of line 2.

Both McCarter and Caquot and Lemaire restored אלי, from מלל, “word, speech”.\(^{35}\) As noted by van der Kooij, there are traces of ink that may belong to a lāmed visible before the lacuna;\(^{36}\) however, this reading is far from certain, and the restoration אמשא, a cognate of BH מַשָא, “pronouncement, oracle”, is now widely accepted.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{33}\) Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla*, 188–89.

\(^{34}\) As rendered by Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla*, 179.


\(^{36}\) Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla*, 104, i.4 (c.2), 1.

In the Hebrew Bible מַשָּא is a technical term denoting an oracle of disaster directed against a foreign nation, a meaning that suits its use in the DAPT.  

The syntagm רְאָמְרִי...ך ה marks what follows, in red ink, as the revelation of the gods; although, note that ה כ might also belong to the direct discourse.

Faint traces remain of the letters preceding the ‘אлеп, but these are almost entirely obscured by a crack in the plaster (fig. 5.2). The ink traces immediately before the ‘אлеп might be consistent with גימל, דלת, טט, לאמד, or רכש. The preceding letter is almost entirely obliterated, a long tailed letter seems probable: i.e. קאפ, מם, or נון; but a distorted יוד is also possible (cf. the יוד on v(d)). The reading of יפעל is certain. The damage at this point makes interpretation exceptionally difficult, and suggested restorations are both numerous and varied.

McCarter, for example, suggested that the verb יפעל might refer to the erection of some sort of monument (perhaps the text itself) commemorating Balaam’s vision. Hence: . אֲחָרָהּ אַשְּ . יָפָעֵל מֹעַת אַשְּ הָתַּלָּה יָדַר , “Let someone make a [ ] hereafter, so that [what] you have heard may be seen!” This reading is appealing, but as Hackett noted, it is difficult to see what could possibly be restored after the verb that would be both physically and semantically appropriate.

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40 Hackett, *The Balaam Text From Deir ʿAllā*, 35.
For her part, Hackett translated the line, “thus will [    ]ʾ do hereafter”.\textsuperscript{41} However, in that case, we would expect the subject of the verb to be either El or the female deity named in I.6, neither of which can be easily reconciled with the ʾālep that is clearly visible at the end of the lacuna.\textsuperscript{42} Alternatively, Hackett noted that the verb might be passive: “thus will it be done”.\textsuperscript{43} But it is still not easy to see what could be restored in the lacuna.

\textbf{Fig. 5.2—The lacuna in I.2}

Caquot and Lemaire entertained the possibility of restoring הַלֻּג, “fortune”, in the emphatic state, though in the end they chose to leave the line untranslated.\textsuperscript{44} Puech, on the other hand, restored קָּפָּ as the first letter and read כַּלַּא, a bi-form of BH כָּלָה, “destruction, annihilation”, bound to אחַרַּה.\textsuperscript{45} Consequently, Puech translated the line: “he will do [sic.] the annihilation(/decrease) of his posterity; the man who will have to see what you have heard”. However, notwithstanding the fact that Puech was able to cite numerous examples

\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item Note also that Hackett was particularly reluctant to restore the emphatic suffix in damaged contexts; Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text From Deir ʿAllā}, 35; cf. idem, “The Dialect of the Plaster Text from Deir ʿAlla”, \textit{Or} 53 (1984): 60.
\item Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text From Deir ʿAllā}, 35.
\item Puech, “Balaʿam and Deir ʿAlla”, 33. I cannot see the head of the קָּפָּ that Puech describes.
\end{enumerate}
of the combination יָפֵעַלְכָּה/כלא, this restoration is problematic. First, in the script of the DAPT lämed is written characteristically small and high on the line (see fig.6.1). As such, the restoration of כלא would suppose a form of the lämed that is unparallele...
A hitherto unexplored alternative is to restore the verb נדא (cf. the BH hapax נׇדׇא* (qere נדם) 2 Kgs 17:21; Ug. נדא, “to frighten away, expel”; BH נדם, “to remove expel” Isa 66:5; Amos 6:3). On palaeographic grounds נדם is a good fit, and it is possible to restore either a G-stem active ptp., נדה, “frightening away”; an N-stem passive ptp., נלה, “one who is frightened away”; or a C-stem 3.m.s. impf., ידא, “he will frighten away”. However, it is difficult to make sense of this verb in the context of the DAPT as a whole—although, it is interesting to note that the notion of fear or terror is apparently picked up again in I.7 (נדה).

Yet another solution could be to understand נד in light of the verb נד, “to fly” (cf. BH נד; Ug. dʾy; Aram. ינד). In this case, the subject of the verbs is best understood to be El; the ellipsis of the subject need not be considered a problem as the expression occurs in the context of a direct quotation. The verb נד is used four times in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 28:49; Jer 48:40; 49:22; Ps 18:11), always with the figurative sense of God (or his agents) swooping down to punish the nations. Consequently, given the prominence afforded to birds later in the inscription (I.7–9), it is possible that the revelation in I.2 contains a word play, drawing on an established avian metaphor for divine judgement. However, it should be noted that in each of the biblical examples, the object of the verb is clearly identified. Perhaps, then, the imagery should be understood to mean that El will abandon the world

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49 A possible association with נד, “to fly” (see below) has also been suggested for this verb; נד*, in Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures (trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles; Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Book House, 1979), 533; cf. נד* (p.184).

50 Cf. the analogous situation in Lachish 3:8, in which a resumptive pronoun (נ_Return) has apparently been reproduced without its referent in the context of a direct quotation; cf. Gareth J. Wearne, “The Role of the Scribe in the Composition of Written Correspondence in Israel and Judah”, in conference volume: Observing the Scribe at Work: Knowledge Transfer and Scribal Professionalism in Pre-Typographic Societies (forthcoming).
to the impending chaos (I.6–7ff.); i.e. “thus may (El) do; may he fly away hereafter”. If the restoration ידא is accepted, then the elision of the final consonant indicates that the verbs should be translated as jussive.

Following this line of enquiry further, it might in fact be preferable to restore the cognate noun דא*, “kite, raptor” (cf. BH ידה; Lev 11:14; Deut 14:13, MT = ידה, but read ידה with HALOT; and ידה, Deut 14:13; Isa 34:15; Ug. diy; Aram. ידה; Arab. ﺡِداً).51 The spelling might indicate that in the Deir ‘Alla dialect ידה was pronounced *diʾ or *dāʾ (in which case, the pronunciation stands in the tradition represented by BH ידה).52 In light of the available space and visible ink traces, it is necessary to restore a letter before דאlet. The preposition כּא is an option. In that case, the expression יֶפֶעֵל כָּדָא might be translated “(El) will do according to the Kite”. An avian reference would not be out of place in the context of the divine revelation of I.2, given the bird sequence in I.7–9 (see below). In fact, the expression יֶפֶעֵל כָּדָא, “he will do according to the kite”, might be understood as standing metonymically for the omina described in I.7ff.; i.e. “(El) will do according to (the sign of) the Kite” (viz. bird omen). The appeal of this reading is twofold: first, it is well suited to the visible letter traces; second, it appears to be consistent with the overarching themes of Combination I. In a more general sense, it may be observed that omens related to birds of prey are relatively commonplace in ancient Near Eastern sources, and the non-specific nature of the allusion might reflect the proverbial nature of the דא* as a bird of ill-omen; but, this is speculation.53 Admittedly, if ידה is restored and its usage is

52 On the retention of the quiescent ʾālep as an historical spelling, cf. Garr, Dialect geography of Syria-Palestine, 49–50.
53 Cf. Nicla de Zorzi, “Bird Divination in Mesopotamia: New Evidence from BM 108874, Kaskal 6 (2009): 1000–1051, from whence the above example was taken. On bird omens in the ancient Near East more generally, see the recent discussion in Duane E. Smith,
understood in terms of a bird omen, it is strange that the דַּּ֞י is not named again in I.7–9 (cf. the comments regarding Lipiński’s proposed restoration ṣ[ך] in I.9). 54

Whatever the case, it is clear that the revelation in I.2 prompted Balaam’s dramatic response in I.3.

The spelling of this word is problematic. 55 Typically, אָּכָּרָב is assumed to be related to the preposition אחר, and is translated anaphorically with reference to the verb יָסֶלֶל. Puech and Lipiński interpreted the final he as the 3.m.s. pronominal (object) suffix. 56 This is the simplest explanation, but it depends on the restoration of the difficult lacuna. Alternatively, McCarter interpreted אָּכָּרָב as a substantive in the emphatic state; 57 however, as Hackett observed, this leaves the problem of explaining an internal emphatic. 58 Both Hackett and McCarter cited BH נַּעַב, “thereafter, further on” (cf. Gen 19:9; Num 17.2, etc.), as an analogous form. However, if the restoration of


54 Cf. Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 132.


56 Lipiński explained the ‘ālep preceding the suffix as serving the function of breaking up the diphthong in order to avoid a doubly closed unstressed syllable (Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 120); Puech offers no explanation.


58 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā, 35. Owing to the absence of any indisputable attestation of the emphatic article in the DAPT, Hackett is right to advise caution when restoring the article in damaged contexts (see above), but this nonetheless remains an option when other possibilities have been exhausted.
is accepted, then the final he can be interpreted as a resumptive
pronoun, and the expression טֶלֶד ֶבֶד אָחְרָה treated as pleonastic; i.e.
“as the kite, he will act like it”.

On the possible interpretations of אש see above. Note that here אש may also have the meaning “fire”.59

Estimates vary as to the number of letters that might be made to fit this lacuna.60 Traces of a long-tailed letter, in red
ink, are clearly visible beneath the ‘ayin. The restoration לא[ול]א[ה]ת.א[ו]ת was first proposed by McCarter, and seems to fit the context.61

Line 3

As Hackett noted, the same verb, with wāw consecutive, occurs in
Num 22:13 and 21 to describe Balaam’s rising after a night-time vision
(cf. Num 22:9–13; 19–21).62 In the context of the DAPT, the verb
serves to emphasise the fact that Balaam received the vision at night
while lying down, asleep.

Compare BH מַמְרָה, which seems to have the general sense, “the
next day”.

The placement of viii(d) to the right of i(c) allows for the restoration
of yod, mem, and nun. Hackett allowed for a small space between the
fragments; but as van der Kooij cautiously observed, it might in fact be

59 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Ala, 179; Lemaire,

60 For the bewildering array of proposed reconstructions see Weippert, “The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla, 155–56, n.17.


possible to identify a join at the edge of the two fragments. Lipiński further proposed that \( v(k) \) should be placed below and to the right of \( i(a) \), which enabled him to restore: \( \text{לבן ל֯נְפֹלַדְּיָ֯רַפָּה} \), “(his) hand was slack, (his) right hand hung low”. In the context this reconstruction is plausible, but in light of the extensive damage at this point it is best to err on the side of caution.

This restoration, first proposed by McCarter, fits physically within the lacuna and graphically with the surviving letter traces. Further, as McCarter observed, it is consistent with the reference to fasting in the following line. Alternatively, Lipiński has proposed that \( v(o) \) should be placed immediately to the left of line 3 of \( i(a) \), allowing the reading \( \text{לְיִלְיִכְלטְּמַן} \), “and he was not able to calm himself”. It is difficult to see which reading is preferable, as traces of a tail that might belong to either a \( קָעָר \) or \( נִֽט נִֽט \) can be seen on \( i(d) \). In the preceding lacuna, Lepinski proposed: \( \text{לְיִלְיִכְלטְּמַן} \), “and he fasted continually in his chamber.”

Line 4

The reference to Balaam’s “people” distances the audience from the narrative. This might suggest that the account was a received tradition, or, at the very least, that the tradents believed the account (and by

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63 van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Allā”, 245. There appear to be traces of ink on the right-hand edge of \( viii(d) \) which might be part of the \( ȳod \) (cf. McCarter, “The Balaam Texts from Deir ‘Allā”, 52). Below this are traces that may belong to a long legged letter; although, if so, then the letter must also extend above the line on \( i(a) \), suggesting \( ת̄ו̄ו̄ \). Note that the space before \( ל̄מֶד \) may be sufficient for a word divider, in which case the \( ל̄מֶד \) should be interpreted as a preposition, i.e. \( ל̄מ̄ד \), “to/of (his) right (hand).”

64 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 115; cf. Seow, “Deir ‘Allā Plaster Texts”, 209, 211, note that Seow restores \( ש̄פ̄ל̄ ש̄פ̄ל̄ \) following \( י̄ד \), rather than Lipiński’s \( נִֽפ̄ל̄ \).

extension the prophecy) to be relevant beyond Balaam’s immediate (diegetic) audience (see §5.1.1.1).

—Syntactically, this particle may be analysed as signifying direct speech (cf. Syriac ܠܡ, 66 or as an interrogative particle (= לְמָּה, “why?”) However, the latter option is almost certainly to be rejected owing to the fact that the interrogative particle  למה is written scriptio plena in I.5. 67 Note that the discourse marker need not occur at the beginning of the direct speech. 68

—Depending on the placement of viii(d) in relation to 1(a) and 1(c), the PN may or may not form part of the discourse. McCarter restored: ויאמרו֯לבלעם֯בר֯בער֯לם֯תצם֯ותבכה יואמְרִי לְבֵל עָם בַּר בָּעֵר וּלְם צֶּכָם וּתְבֵכָה “and they said to Balaam, son of Beor, ‘do you fast? Do you weep?’”, while Hackett restored: ויאמרו֯לה֯בלעם֯בר֯בער֯לם֯תצם֯ותבכה יואמְרִי לֵבֵל עָם בַּר בָּעֵר וּלְם צֶּכָם וּתְבֵכָה “and they said to him, ‘Balaam, son of Beor, why are you fasting and crying?’”. The damage to the letter on the right-hand edge of viii(d) precludes certainty. 69


Line 5

The verb הוהי, “to reveal, declare”, is attested six times in the Hebrew Bible, mainly in the book of Job (Job 15:17; 32:6, 10, 17; 36:2; Ps 19:2 [Heb.3]). In Aramaic the comparatively common root חָוָּי has distinctly visual connotations. Consequently, the expression may be compared with הֵּיהַרְאֵנוּ הָדוֹפָדִיִּךְ, “Whatever (YHWH) shows me, I will make known to you” (Num 23:3).

—Only the śīn and part of a short legged letter are visible. Based on his interpretation of I.16 (= I.14; cf. also, I.6), Hoftijzer restored the DN שָׁדְרַי. However, it is not certain that שָׁדַר in I.14 should be interpreted as a DN (see below). Therefore, given that שָדַר is parallel to the אלהים in the next line, it is better to follow Caquot and Lemaire in restoring שָׁדַרְוּ. 71

The etymology of the noun שָׁדִּין (šaddayîn) is debated. McCarter, following Cross, compared שָׁדִּין with the biblical epithet אֵלַיְשַדָּי, which he took to mean “God of the mountain”. Accordingly, he identified the שָׁדִּין as “the ones of the mountain”; i.e. the gods who meet at the mountain of assembly. 72 Alternatively, Lipiński has argued that שָׁדַר is a qattal stem derived from the Aramaic root חָוָּי, “to sprinkle”, which may reflect the original function of these deities as water suppliers and fertility gods. 73 Accordingly, Lipiński proposed the translation,
“Fécondateurs”; a translation that fits well within the context of the DAPT (see below).

As Hackett observed, the restoration of the following verb is entirely arbitrary. Both ఆ and ఆ are obvious possibilities. Levine (following Puech) restored [సశ్రద్యిన], “they (the šaddayin) have planned”; however, the heṭ is by no means as certain as Levine suggests. Note that if the verb relates to the divine assembly in I.6 or the delivery of the revelation in I.1–2, then a perfect is called for. If, on the other hand, it relates to the future events that Balaam is about to recount, an imperfect would be preferable.

—The imperative of ఆ, “to see”. The language of vision is striking in light of I.7ff. (see below).

Line 5–6

Hoftijzer has convincingly explained as an 'p[l] perfect of ఆ. As has often been recognised, the apparently chiastic structure of I.5–6 indicates that the ఆ and ఆ should be understood as working in concert, rather than as opposing divine factions.

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78 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 192.
Caquot and Lemaire offered the alternative restoration שמש; i.e. the deified sun; equivalent to the Ugaritic goddess šps. However, McCarter objected that (1) the Aramaic noun שמש is masculine; although, he acknowledged that in Hebrew שמש apparently has a mixed gender; and (2) it is curious that a solar deity would be tasked with obscuring the sky with a cloud (though on the translation of עב, see below). Instead, McCarter proposed the personified שש, “Sheol” (cf. Isa 5:14), followed by ים or לג to fill the space. But, it is not clear that Sheol would be better suited to the context. Moreover, as Hackett observed, the imagery in I.6–7 is logically consistent with a solar deity who possessed the power to provide or withhold light. A fourth


80 Following Hoftijzer, the main proponent of the restoration ש(progress) was Baruch Levine; cf. Levine, Numbers 21–36, 249–50, who interpreted שרגועשתר as a goddess whose composite name synthesised an astral aspect with that of fertility.


82 McCarter, “The Balaam Texts from Deir ʿAllā”, 53. Although it is equally difficult to see how רער could relate to Sheol.

83 In any case there is in fact little evidence for a Canaanite cult of the deified Sheol; cf. Hans M. Barstad, “Sheol,” DDD:268–70.

84 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā, 41.
possibility, identified by Hackett, is to restore the Hurrian/Mesopotamian goddess Šala.\(^{85}\) This is certainly possible. The symbol of Šala was a barley stalk, suggesting she may have been an agricultural goddess (cf. 1:14), and in Mesopotamian tradition she was a wife of the storm god Adad.\(^{86}\)

Perhaps a preferable alternative, however, would be Šaušga, the Hittite goddess of fecundity, whose responsibilities seem to have included the provision of rain (see the discussion of תפרו֯סכרי֯שמין below).\(^{87}\) In iconographic representations Šaušga was often associated with the storm god, and in some contexts she forms a symbolic triad with earth and solar deities, representing the basic fertility requirements of agrarian society.\(^{88}\) Yet more significant, however, is the fact that Šaušga can be identified with Ištar, thereby drawing a connection between the female DN in I.6 and the reference to עשתר in I.14.\(^{89}\) In fact, there is evidence that in the Neo-Assyrian period Šaušga could be used as an appellation of Ištar.\(^{90}\) Most importantly, the probable depiction of Šaušga on a Late Bronze Age ivory plaque discovered at

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\(^{85}\) Ibid, 41; cf. Lluís Feliu, *The God Dagan in Bronze Age Syria* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 19; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 289–93. Note that Feliu draws a distinction between Šalaš, the wife of Dagan, chiefly worshipped in Syria, and Šala, the wife of Adad, chiefly worshipped in Mesopotamia.


\(^{88}\) Alexander, “Šaušga and the Hittite Ivory from Megiddo”, 168, 176, 179.


\(^{90}\) Beckman, “Ištar of Nineveh Reconsidered”, 8.
Megiddo, and a 9th century bronze plaque from Tel Dan, suggests that her sphere of influence may have extended as far as the Palestine.\footnote{Alexander, “Šaušga and the Hittite Ivory from Megiddo”, 161–82; Tallay Ornan, “The Lady and the Bull: Remarks on the Bronze Plaque from Tel Dan”, in Essays on Ancient Israel in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na’aman (eds. Yairah Amit, et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 297–312 Alexander believed that the ivory plaque was probably not locally produced, and may have been acquired through trade or booty; however, Ornan has argued that the bronze plaque from Dan reflects local workmanship.}

—Caquot and Lemaire were the first to read מָטָרָה מָטָרָה . מִטָּרָה as f.s. impv. from מָטָרָה, “to sew”, and מִטָּרָה “to shut”.\footnote{Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ʿAlla”, 197. cf. Hoftijzer’s, [לע] מִטָּרָה . מִטָּרָה בָּשַׁר, “[let not] the abundant rain (?) [בָּשַׁר] the bolts of heaven”} If this is correct, then the expression מָטָּרָה מָטָּרָה should probably be interpreted as a verbal hendiadys, meaning “to sew shut”.\footnote{Cf. McCarter, “The Balaam Texts from Deir ʿAllā”, 54.} In the Hebrew Bible the expression to shut up the heavens is well attested as a metaphor for the withholding of rain, often as a form of divine punishment (e.g. Gen 8:2, which uses מִטָּרָה; Deut 11:17; 1 Kgs 8:35 = 2 Chron 6:26; 2 Chron 7:13; cf. Amos 4:7).\footnote{Hoftijzer, “What did the Gods Say?”, 123–24; cf. Helmer Ringgren, “Balaam and the Deir ʿAlla Inscription”, in Isaac Leo Seeligman Volume: Essays on the Bible and the Ancient World, vol. 3 (eds. by A. Rofé and Y. Zakovitch; Jerusalem: Rubinstein, 1983), 95. On the conceptual context of the figurative language of the DAPT, see Levine, “The Plaster Inscriptions from Deir ʿAllā”, 61–62.}

Such imagery is commensurate with the agrarian lifestyle at Deir ʿAlla. Remains of cereals and other crops excavated from the Phase IX occupation level indicate that during the Iron Age II, intensive agricultural activity was conducted around the Tell.\footnote{Cf. Eva Kaptijn, Life on the Watershed: Reconstructing Subsistence in a Steppe Region Using Archaeological Survey: A Diachronic Perspective on Habitation in the Jordan Valley (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2009), 365–68.} However, the climate at Deir ʿAlla is variable and annual precipitation often falls
below the levels necessary for rain-fed agriculture.\textsuperscript{96} To combat the unreliable climate, it seems that the valley relied upon a complex network of irrigation canals (cf. §7.1). But this irrigation system was still dependent on adequate precipitation, and short-term climactic changes would have affected the inhabitants of the valley.\textsuperscript{97} In this situation, a prophecy about the restriction of rain would have serious implications for the inhabitants of the site, and might explain Balaam’s extreme response in I.3. Of course, it is not certain that the DAPT was a local composition, such imagery would be at home throughout the ancient Levant; but it may explain why the text was felt to be relevant at Deir ’Alla.

Be that as it may, Manfred Weippert has proposed an alternative restoration, תָּפַּקֶּי, a feminine jussive of √פקק, “to smash, break to pieces”, interpreting סֵכְרֵי שָׁמַיִם as “the bolts of heaven”.\textsuperscript{98} In that case, it seems that some sort of deluge was intended (cf. Gen 7:11; Ps 78:23, describing God’s provision of manna).\textsuperscript{99} However, it is less easy to see how the imagery of rain or a flood relates to I.6–7.


\textsuperscript{97} Cf. Kaptijn, \textit{Life on the Watershed}, 375.


suffix; i.e. “sew shut the heavens with your cloud.” However, Lipiński has argued that if the language of the DAPT is Aramaic (as he supposes), then עִבֵּה is unlikely to mean “cloud”, since in Aramaic the noun is usually vocalised עַעֵבָּא (note that in the Deir ʿAlla orthography the diphthong was generally retained see §6.3.2).100 Consequently, Lipiński proposed that עִבֵּה should instead be identified with the Aramaic noun עֲעֵבָּא, “bosom”, which, he argues, is frequently used metonymically to mean “midst”.101 He therefore interpreted ב- as a spatial preposition introducing a main clause and translates the remainder of the line “in your midst let there be darkness and not brilliance!” As Lipiński commented, the metonymy is well chosen inasmuch as it is applied to a female deity.102

Lipiński went even further, however, and interpreted the imagery as an allusion to an annular eclipse (in which only the outer-ring of the sun’s disk remains visible). He then observed that if the destruction of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX is understood to have occurred ca. 760 B.C.E. (cf. §7.4), one could also argue that the eclipse referred to might have been inspired by the eclipse mentioned in Amos 8:9, ca. June 15, 763 B.C.E. If so, this would imply that the DAPT is almost contemporary with the original composition; although he noted that other eclipses are also possible.103

The association with a solar eclipse is certainly suggestive, but it should be noted that the text does not require this degree of specificity. As Levine and others have observed, the motif of celestial darkness as a punishment for sinfulness is well known from biblical literature (e.g. Ezek 33:3–8; Zech 1:14–17).104 Moreover, it might also be argued that

100 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 128.
101 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 128, n.119.
102 Ibid, 128.
an indefinite period of drought and darkness makes better sense of the subsequent expression: ואל תני עדעלם, “but do not remain angry forever!”, assuming that reading is correct (see below).

Finally, Levine has suggested that כי should be interpreted as the causal conjunction “because, that”, rather than the possessive suffix. However, in this instance there does not seem to be sufficient space for a word divider between בêt and קאֵפ. Furthermore, as Hoftijzer observed, word dividers may be omitted in the DAPT, but usually only between words that are closely related. On this basis, it seems strange to find a word divider omitted before the conjunction כי but inserted after it.

This vocable is especially difficult. It may be understood as the locative particle, i.e. “in your cloud, there (שם) is darkness,” but this leaves the problem that ואל is left to govern a noun (see below). Hackett surmounted this difficulty by vocalizing שם as an infinitive absolute from שים, “to put, place”.

Line 6–7

The interpretation of the syntax of the end of line 6 depends, to a large extent, on how one interprets the negative particle ואל. As noted above, Hackett supplied an infinitive derived from שים, which she interpreted as having volitive force, in order that ואל might govern a verb. However, there is evidence—albeit comparatively rare—that in BH לא might sometimes be used before a noun. Regardless,
the sense is clear; Lipiński described it as a nominal sentence with a volitive acceptation.\(^{109}\)

**Line 7**

—Hoftijzer and van der Kooij originally read עטום, which Hoftijzer understood to be a cognate of *ʿẓm (cf. Heb עזים, “to be strong, numerous”), with the sense, in this context, of “thick darkness”.\(^{110}\) However, as McCarter notes, this presupposes a phonological merger *ʿζ > ṣ, which is contra-indicated elsewhere in the inscription (cf. עֵצָה, II.9, עץ, II.9, where *ʿζ > ṣ).\(^{111}\)

An alternative reading, עלם, was first proposed by McCarter (followed by Hackett), who observed that there is sufficient space for a short lāmed to be read instead of the damaged ṣêt.\(^{112}\) McCarter interpreted עלם as an adjectival phrase “perpetual radiance”. But, it seems preferable for reasons of parallelism to interpret ע(ט /ל)ם as a noun, parallel to ואלסכ רכי (for the interpretation of שככ see below), rather than an adjective. In that way, the command to sew shut the heavens in I.6 (assuming that reading is correct) is followed by a pair of two

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balanced couplets joined by והל. In other words, it seems that I.6–I.7 repeats a pattern of antithetical pairs for dramatic or mnemonic effect.

However, this leaves the question of how to translate טֶשֶׁת. Victor Sasson attempted to explain טֶשֶׁת as a cognate of the BH nip'al hapax עָנָמָה (Isa 9:18), which he related to Arabic عتمة, a noun signifying the darkness of night, or the gloom after dusk. Alternatively, Puech has explained טֶשֶׁת as a metathesis of Aram. עָמַשׁ, “obscurity, darkness.” Lipiński has also suggested a possible link with etemmu, “spirit of the dead”; however it is not clear how this could suit the immediate context.

Ultimately, whatever the etymology of טֶשֶׁת, it is syntactically and philologically preferable to restore a noun connoting “darkness.”

The reading [ח] is reasonably assured. Hoftijzer initially read סמר, which he related to the Hebrew verb סמר, “to shudder” (cf. Ps 119:120; Job 4:15), translating the noun as “shuddering fear.” Alternatively, McCarter cautiously proposed that סמר might be related to Heb. הֵקְרָא, “to bristle,” and translated “bristling (i.e. radiate)


115 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 129; cf. already Puech, “Le texte “ammonite” de Deir ʿAlla”, 22. Note, however, that Lipiński’s gloss, “shade,” is not self-evident in the Akkadian, cf. “etemmu”, CAD 4:397. Furthermore, even in light of the apparently funereal content of Combination II (see below), it is not clear how etemmu, “spirit of the dead”, would suit the immediate context.


117 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 198.
with light.” However, Hoftijzer has subsequently challenged the semantic validity of this proposal.\(^\text{118}\)

Other proposals include Sasson’s suggestion that סמר might be related to Arabic سمر, which has connotations of “night, darkness”\(^\text{119}\)— although, as noted above, it seems preferable, for syntactic reasons, to identify the noun with the semantic domain of light, rather than darkness; and Lipiński’s potential Akkadian cognate *samaru*, which he loosely translates as “sex appeal.” The latter might be a pun on the בּ of the preceding line, although one should be very careful about speculatively reading imagery into the text.\(^\text{120}\)

Reference should also be made to the radically different solution offered by Hackett. Instead of treating לַא as a negative conjunction, Hackett interpreted it as a preposition and restored סָכִּרְךֶּ, instead of סָכִּרְךֶּ, which she related to סָכִּרְךֶּ in the preceding line. Hence, she translated the clause: “and put the dark se[al ] on your bolt.” However, this presupposes that עלם (Hackett’s reading) belongs to the preceding clause, which although possible, is less likely.

Even so, the restoration of *kāp* instead of *mēm* is palaeographically valid and may suggest another, previously unconsidered, alternative.\(^\text{121}\)


\(^{120}\) Cf. Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II*, 130.

That is, the root סָכָר might possibly be related to the Akkadian verb sekēru, “to heat”, and to the nominal and verbal derivatives of Arab. סָקר, “heat”, which can refer specifically to the oppressive heat of the sun. Consequently, if this proposal is acceptable, it may be possible to translate עטָם סָכָרי, “gloominess and not your heat,” which may be readily understood if the deity in I.6 is identified as שמש. However, this is the only instance in the two couplets in which the noun takes the pronominal suffix, and, it is therefore preferable to follow Levine and translate כי as a conjunction.

is probably the 2.f.s. יְבָל, “to give”, with התה, “terror” (cf. Heb. יְבָל, “to be dismayed”), as its direct object. Caquot and Lemaire noted that the synonymous expression נתן חת is used in Ezek 26:17; 32:23 24, 25, 26, 32.

Alternatively, McCarter (followed by Hackett) restored חותם, “a seal,” and translated the sentence בָּשָּׁךְ אלהי עָם התה, “you will put a seal upon the thick cloud of darkness”; however, cf. the discussion of above.

Wesselius has challenged the restoration of יְבָל יָתָה on the grounds that the imperfect of יָתָה is never attested in Hebrew or Aramaic (Aram. the imperfect of נתן is used). Consequently, he proposed the alternate

122 Cf. “sekēru B”, CAD 15:213–14; Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 1379. This assumes that Arabic j represents etymological /*k/. While, in Arabic the use of j to represent etymological /*k/ is relatively stable, there is evidence for the interchangability of the phonemes *k and *q; cf. MH קְרַסֵם < BH כִּרֵסֵם, “to cut, nibble” (Peʾah 2.7); MH קְפֵל < BH כָּפֵל, “to double, fold” (Šabb 2.3), cf. M. H. Segal, A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew (Eugene Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 30, §1.2.45.
restoration ʿḥ, to hide.” However, the surviving letter traces seem better suited to ḫē than to ḥēt.\textsuperscript{126}

The restoration ב֯חשך “on the thick cloud of darkness” was first proposed by McCarter, and has found wide acceptance.\textsuperscript{127} In light of ב֯(CharSequence in the preceding line, Lepinski read: “[may] you inspire terror midst the darkness.” The reading ב֯חשך, “much darkness,” adopted here, was first proposed by Baruch Levine.\textsuperscript{128}

The verb חﻦ has attracted several explanations. Hoftijzer originally related it to the root חנה, “to mutter, utter a sound.”\textsuperscript{129} Alternatively, McCarter, proposed that חﻦ might be related to the homonym חנה, “to remove,” and read: “and you will not remove it [viz. the seal, חתם] forever.”\textsuperscript{130} Then again, Lipiński, following a suggestion by R. Hazim and O. Ghul, identified חﻦ with the root חגה, which in Arabic (هج) means “to glow,” and translated the clause, “and may you not glow forever!”\textsuperscript{131}

Yet another possibility was proposed by Manfred Weippert who suggested that the verb may be derived from the geminate root חגן, which he related to Akkadian agāgu, “to be angry” (cf. Arabic هج, “to

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\textsuperscript{126} Cf. Wesselius, “Thoughts about Balaam”, 596–97, but cf. n.6. For the grapheme in question cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from DeirʿAlla*, pl.2 i(c), line 9.


\textsuperscript{128} Levine, “The DeirʿAlla Plaster Inscriptions”, 197.

\textsuperscript{129} Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from DeirʿAlla*, 199.

\textsuperscript{130} McCarter, “The Balaam Texts from DeirʿAllā”, 54.

burn”), and interpreted as limiting the duration of the ensuing calamity: “but do not remain angry forever.”

Ultimately, the decision about how to interpret this line is subjective. I have opted here to follow Weippert in reading a limiting clause on the basis that an oppositional noun-pair would be imprecisely balanced with the preceding couplets, insofar as it alone is introduced by a verb (הָלָב). But it should be noted that other possibilities exist.

Lines 7–8

The causal conjunction כי in I.7 is the turning point of the whole of Combination I. In the past כי has typically been interpreted as part of the divine speech, and as such, it has been understood as either: (1) retrospective, as a motivation for the gods’ actions in I.6–7: i.e. the gods have done A because of B; (2) prospective, as supplying a reason for the limitation of the imminent catastrophe (assuming ואל תגעי עלם in the preceding clause means “do not be angry forever,”): i.e. do not be angry forever, for X will be the result; or (3) resultative, read as part of the curse: i.e. sew shut the heavens...in order that...

In a radical new study, Erhard Blum has argued that כי may be an editorial insertion—marking a seam between two previously independent Vorlagen—which is used to explicate the decision in the

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divine council (i.e. option 1, above). 134 According to Blum, the disproportionate length of the sequence describing the inversion of the natural order (I.7ff.), the lack of formal resolution in the extant fragments, and the tension between the outlooks of the two parts (i.e. between the speech of the אלהים in I.2, and the abysmally desolate world, “*abgründig desolaten Welt*” of I.7ff.), suggest that I.1–7 and I.7ff. were not originally parts of a unified whole. 135 However, there is yet another alternative, which alleviates the tensions identified by Blum.

Rather than viewing I.7ff. as a continuation of the divine speech (I.6–7), it is possible that the prophecy might in fact conclude after עלם, and that כי might mark the resumption of Balaam’s own voice, in which he reports the contents of the dream-vision which has hitherto only been summarised in I.2 (see the schematic representation in appendix E). According to this interpretation, I.7ff. might be understood as a series of ill-omens, characterised by the disharmony of nature; i.e. *the gods will do A* (I.6–7), *for it is portended by B* (I.7ff.). 136 In other words, the section beginning from כי (I.7ff.) might contain the description of Balaam’s dream, which consisted of a series of portents of the impending plague. This should not be surprising, given that I.1 introduces a narrative about a nocturnal revelation.

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134 Blum, “Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir ‘Alla”, 593. However, he left open the question as to whether the lines following כי should be understood as a continuation of the divine speech, or a resumption of Balaam’s narration.

135 According to Blum, Combination I conflates two different texts, one a prophetic narrative (I.1–7), the other a wisdom teaching (I.7–15); Blum, “Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir ‘Alla”, 593–96.

136 The syntax is loosely comparable to 1 Samuel 14:10, in which כי, following an imperfect, anticipates a predetermined outcome expressed in the perfect conjugation: יָאַרְאָה, if they say ‘come up to us’, then we will go up, *for YHWH has given them into our hand*. That will be the sign for us” (cf. also 1 Sam 20:22).
The inversion of the natural order—symbolising chaos and divine displeasure—is a widely attested motif in ancient Near Eastern literature. And it is reasonable to suppose that the DAPT contains a reflex of this motif, in which the inversion of the natural order is interpreted as a harbinger of woe. This suggestion comports well with biblical and early Jewish tradition that Balaam was an augur and diviner (see appendix D).

If it is the case that I.6ff. comprises an account of an oracular dream and its interpretation, then the closest parallels can be found in the biblical dream oracles, which similarly contain a description of the dream omen, followed by its interpretation (e.g. Gen 37:5–8, 9–10; 40:5, 9–13, 16–19; 41:1–36; Dan 2:31–45; 4:10–27). However, it should be noted that the order of vision and interpretation is inverted (perhaps for dramatic effect) in the DAPT.

In this case, we should not look to I.7ff. for the resolution of the plague, as argued by Blum, but rather view Combination I together as a complex whole. Indeed, it will be argued in the next section that the resolution which Blum seeks can probably be found in Combination II.

As was recognised by Hoftijzer, the conjugation of the verbs in this section may be of some assistance for interpreting I.7ff. Initially, Hoftijzer identified two imperfect verbs in this section: ישנה (I.8) and יבל (I.9); however, as will be discussed below, the first of these should

137 Cf. Paul A. Kruger, “A World Turned on its Head in ancient Near Eastern Prophetic Literature: A Powerful Strategy to Depict Chaotic Scenarios,” VT 62 (2012):58–76. This motif has been widely recognised in the DAPT since it was described by McCarter, “The Balaam Texts from Deir ʿAllā”, 58, n.78.

138 In a recent Masters thesis at Macquarie University, Axlexandra Wrathal has explored, among other things, the important role of suspense in narrative artistry of the DAPT; see Alexandra Wrathall, “Reading Between the Lines: A Narratological Approach to the Deir ʿAlla Inscription Combination I” (M.Res. Diss., Macquarie University, 2014), 42–45.

probably be read as a noun,\(^{140}\) while the second appears to belong to a discrete syntactic unit. This leaves three verbs in this section: חרבת (I.7–8), צרה (I.8), and possibly [ץ]התי (I.8). Of these, the third must be omitted from consideration; even if it is identified as a verb (see below), the fact remains that the ending must be restored, and all that can be said with certainty is that it is not an imperfect form. This leaves חרבת, “to scorn, revile”, and צרה, “to split, rend”, both of which may be parsed as either a perfect or a participle.\(^ {141}\) However, if I.9 is understood as a continuation of the inverted world-order motif, then on the basis of כאלה it is reasonable to translate the verbs as perfect.\(^ {142}\) This is consistent with the interpretation proposed above.

This bird species is apparently named in Isaiah 38:14, where it is vocalised סוס עגור (cf. Jer 8:7, where the Qere reads סיסוְּעָּגוּר). On the basis of Jeremiah 8:7 this bird should be identified as a migratory species. The reference to migratory birds might suggest that the prophecy refers to the springtime, toward the end of the wet season (cf. §7.1); an inference that accords well with the apparent reference to the restriction of fertility in I.14.

Following local Palestinian tradition, H. B. Tristram identified the ססאגר as the swift (cf. local Arab. ⦿).\(^ {143}\) However, Lipiński has argued in favour of its identification as a swallow, noting the physical similarity of the two (cf. Isa 38:14, where סוס עגור is translated LXX χελιδών; Vulg. pullus hirundinis; Syr. ܣܢܘܢܝܬܐ). According to Lipiński

\(^{140}\) Cf. ibid, 130, n.57.

\(^{141}\) For structural reasons, I agree with Hoftijzer that חרבת is unlikely to be a noun forming part of a list of birds (cf. Hoftijzer, “What did the Gods Say?”, 130, and n.59).

\(^{142}\) Although note the possibility that the verbs of this section might be interpreted as gnomic or prophetic perfects, cf. Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 131; Hoftijzer, “What did the Gods Say?”, 140, and n.109.

might be explained etymologically as a reference to the swallow’s characteristic nest (cf. Arab. عجر, “projection, protrusion”).

Alternatively, Rendsburg has cited an Eblaite cognate, sa-su-ga-lum, which apparently denotes some sort of coloured bird. He has plausibly, but tentatively, proposed the golden oriol (Oriolus galbula), which meets the criteria of a small brightly coloured migratory songbird (cf. the onomatapoic צאף, Isa 38:14), commonly found throughout northern Syria and Israel.

*Line 8*

is typically translated either “eagle,” or “vulture” (cf. Arab. نسر). Lipiński contended that the subsequent reference to the “vulture’s nest” נשר (نشاط) in I.8 indicates that נשר should be translated eagle, but Tristram’s earlier arguments for the identification of the נשר as the Griffon vulture (Gyps Fulvus) on the basis of its bald appearance remain convincing (cf. Mich 1:16c, הרחים הקרחתך כנשר, “make yourself as bald as the nešer”). Significantly, the Griffon vulture is particularly common around the region of Deir ‘Alla.

Hoftijzer restored lāmed after qôp and read: הוּא הָרִיחֹנִי יִעַנֶה, “and the voice of vultures will resound”. Traces of ink may be discerned on the edge of the short lacuna which might belong to a lāmed, but other restorations have been proposed. Thus, Lemaire interpreting the

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147 Tristram, *The Survey of Western Palestine*, 95.
word as another bird’s name offered the restoration [א]נשרךר[א], “l’aigle et le péli(can)”\(^{149}\) though, the surviving letter traces are a poor match for ʾālep. Alternatively, Puech proposed קן, “nest,” and read an elliptical clause related to חרפת; i.e. “because the sparrow mocks the eagle, the nest of vultures the ostrich”.\(^{150}\) This reading may indeed be preferable insofar as קן, “the nest of the vulture”, provides a pleasing and balanced parallel to ובין צנץ, “the young of the hawk”, and אפרחי֯אנפה, “the chick of the heron”, in the subsequent clauses. However, it seems to me that the syntax of the following clauses requires the restoration of a verb in the lacuna after יענה (see below), and, consequently, I am inclined to read both נשר and קן־רחמן as the objects of חרפת.\(^{151}\)

Tristram identified Hebr. הרם as the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), which could formerly be found throughout Palestine during the summer months; although, today they are a threatened species.\(^{152}\) However, he also noted that the brown coloured young of the Egyptian vulture are rarely seen in Palestine. This might suggest that the הרם of the DAPT is a different species of vulture, or else it might be

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\(^{151}\) Note that in the analogous list of positive reversals in Isaiah 11:6–8 the verbs take a mixture of one, two, or three, subjects, suggesting that it is not necessary to assume a 1:1 ratio of subject and object in the DAPT.

explained in light of the pattern of unusual behaviour that characterises this section; i.e. the ṣāmāḥ has uncharacteristically built its nest in the north (cf. “the ostrich had compassion on the young of the hawk”, below).

—the interpretation of יענה and the restoration of the following word depend to a large extent on the syntax of the subsequent clause. As a verb יענה may be translated “answers” or even “sings.” As a noun it may be interpreted in light of BH יַעֲנָּה, “female ostrich” (cf. יָעֵן, “male ostrich”).

The restoration of the next word, beginning with ḥēt, has also proved something of a difficulty. Typically it has been felt that this should be translated as another bird’s name. McCarter proposed the restoration חָסִידָּה, “stork”, noting the physical similarity of the stork to the “heron” (אנפה), which is named later in the line. However, he acknowledged that this restoration is problematic, inasmuch as the subsequent verb צרה leads us to expect a masculine object, while the only known cognate (Heb. חֲסִידָּה), is feminine. In addition, if the word at the beginning of the break is restored as a noun, then it is necessary to supply a verb before בני֯נצץ; but there does not seem to be sufficient space for this. Lipiński attempted to resolve this difficulty by treating line 9 as a list of nouns related, by ellipsis, to חֲרַפת; though this results in cumbersome syntax.

Other solutions may also be viable. If יענה is understood to be a noun, then it is possible to restore a verb at this point. Repetition of the verb


חרפת (I.7) is an obvious possibility, but it is not the only option. A previously unexplored alternative might be to restore f.s. perfect or participle [חת] (cf. Heb. חָוָס, “to pity, look compassionately upon”). There appears to be space for the restoration of about 4–5 letters in the lacuna plus one or two dividers, and this allows enough room for the restoration of the preposition על, which typically accompanies this verb. Given the sequence of inversions that characterises this section, the restoration חון is particularly apposite, as in the Hebrew Bible the parental negligence of the ostrich is proverbial; e.g. כי תעזבלת ארץ ותהיה על עפר חמה: ותשכח כי רגל תזה את השדה; הקשיח בניה ללא לה לריק: יגיעה比利 פחד: “for she abandons her eggs on the ground, and lets them warm upon the dust; she forgets that a foot may crush it, or some beast of the field may step on it; she treats her young harshly, as though they were not her own, with no concern that her labour may have been in vain” (Job 39:14–16).

The identification of the noun following בני is also debated. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij read this as נזח, and translated it “distress, trouble”. However, as McCarter observed, we would expect some sort of bird here. Puech has proposed the restoration זץ, which may be interpreted as a cognate of Syr. نژ, and BH ז, “hawk”.

Consequently, it is possible to restore: “the ostrich has compa[ssion on] the young of the hawk.” As such, it is particularly interesting to note that in the allegory of Ezekiel 16:5 חון has the sense of showing compassion to a foundling.

157 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 113, 174, 179, 202–03.
For the identification of the verb בָּרָה with an Aramaic root meaning “to rip, lacerate”, see McCarter (cf. Arab. ضرر, “to harm, injure”).

In Heb. the noun.Usage is traditionally identified as the heron.

Lines 8–9

and may all be identified as species of birds.is known from the Hebrew Bible (cf. דְּרוֹר; Ps 84:4; Prov 26:2) and is traditionally translated “swallow.” The noun בָּרָה, “dove,” has cognates in both Syr. and Heb. However, as McCarter observed, in the context a specific bird is probably meant, and בָּרָה has been plausibly translated as “sparrow.”

Hořtijzer read נשרת as a plural noun, “birds of prey, eagles,” but as McCarter observed, the syntax leads one to expect a verb at this point. Note also that if [] and נשרת are interpreted as verbs, then I.7–9


comprises a series of three syntactically parallel cola, in which a subj., verb, obj. (x2) word order is repeated.

As McCarter noted, the Akkadian verb *našāru* can mean “belittle”, while in Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic, the D-stem of נשר can mean “to tear, pluck, mutilate”. In Arabic the root ذسر means “to tear into pieces, rend with teeth or beak” and, by extension, can also denote the beak of a bird of prey; hence the translation above: “the swallow tears at the dove and the sparrow with its beak.”

As Meindert Dijkstra has observed, in the Hebrew Bible the nouns יון and צפר twice appear (in reverse order) as a parallel pair (Ps 84:4; Prov 26:2).

*Line 9*

[... ] Lipiński proposed the restoration פְּרִי from the root *√דיה* (see above); although this is not required in the context.  

[... ] Seow offers the restoration: פְּרִי, רַבְשָׁר, מַעַת בַּאֲשֶׁר, וּ[ ] it is the staff [that is led],” which is plausible, but not certain.

Both Hofwijzer, reading: “in the place fit for breading ewes the staff (viz., punishment) will bring hares,” and Caquot and Lemaire, reading: “à l’endroit où le bâton (= la houlette) menait (paître) des brebis, des lièvres mangent,” identified הבשרא with the Aramaic noun הרשל, “place.” However, McCarter (followed by

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165 Cf. Gesenius, Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, 571–72; Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 2790.
167 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 132.
168 Seow, “Deir ʿAllā Plaster Texts”, 210, 211.
169 Hofwijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 179, 205; Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ʿAlla”, 199, trans.: “in the place where the stick
Hackett) rejected this on syntactical grounds, and proposed the translation “instead of ewes, it is the rod that is led”; apparently on the analogy of BH בַּאֲשֶׁר. However, in BH the syntagm בַּאֲשֶׁר is typically used to signify equivalence or causality (i.e. “inasmuch as,” or “on account of”), not substitution (“instead of”).

Yet a third alternative is to interpret בַּאֲשֶׁר as the infinitive construct of the verb √אָּשַר, “to walk” (which in pi‘el can mean “to lead”; cf. Isa 3:12; 9:15), with the preposition, indicating a temporal clause, followed by an apodosis with an imperfect verb: i.e. “when ewes lead, it is the rod that is led”. This expression has proverbial force.

Line 10

Hoftijzer identified חפש as a nominalisation derived from √חפש, and translated it as a vocative following an imperative “fear! You seekers”. Alternatively, Caquot and Lemaire (followed by McCarter) read חפש, “freedmen”; although they were unable to fill the lacuna before אַשְׁרָה. However, this shift of focus into the human realm seems premature in light of the apparent reference to hyenas at the end of the line. Consequently—based on his placement of v(d) between i(c) and i(d)—Lipiński proposed the restoration: [וֹרֵיאת חפש, “the flitter-mouse gets [drunk on] brewage” (cf. Arab. خفاش, “bat”). He then restored the parallel

(= leadership) led (grazing) sheep, hares eat”; cf. Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 133.


Hebrew noun \( \text{ןָּעַלְפָּה} \) [עטڵ], “bats,” before \( \text{שַׁחֲרִי} \) תַּלְלָר: i.e. “the flitter mouse gets drunk on brewage, bats are drinking wine”. Note that Seow restored the plural \( \text{חָפֻּשַּׁן} \) (which he translated “serfs”) followed by \( \text{בֵּט} \), which results in an even closer parallelism.¹⁷⁴

Recent studies recognise 24 different species of Jordanian Chiroptera, constituting an estimated 31% of the total mammalian species in Jordan.¹⁷⁵ Consequently, it should not be surprising to find bats included in a list of birds and animals in the region. Although, we should not presume that the DAPT was a local composition (cf. §5.1.1.1).

On the translation of \( \text{חָפֻּשַּׁן} \) as hyena see McCarter.¹⁷⁶ Hoftijzer has argued that “hyenas” (or “aggressors” as he translated \( \text{חָפֻּשַּׁן} \)) heeding instruction must be considered a change for the good, and, consequently, that this line should not be understood as a continuation of the words spoken to the goddess, beginning in line 6.¹⁷⁷ However, the imagery simply describes the inversion of the natural order; it is not necessary to assume a change for the worse.¹⁷⁸

**Line 11**

On the interpretation of \( \text{יֶקֶחָה} \) as “laughs” see McCarter.¹⁷⁹

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Hoftijzer, identified ענית as a nominalisation derived from the verbal root √ענה, “to answer”, seeing this as some sort of cultic functionary comparable to the āpilulāpīltu, “answerer,” from Mari. In this he was followed by Levine, who saw ענית as belonging to a list of cultic and prophetic functionaries; however, as Hackett countered, there no reason to prefer a list when it is possible to continue the series of oppositions. Lipiński also interpreted ענית in a cultic context, but translated it “songstress.” Caquot and Lemaire, on the other hand, interpreted ענית as a “poor woman” (cf. Isa 51:21; 54:11), and saw the imagery in terms of a poor woman mixing expensive ointments.

Line 12

This line admits no easy interpretation. אזר is presumably related to BH אֵזוֹר, “waistcloth, girdle”. McCarter has ingeniously proposed that קרן is related to BH קֹר, which in its only occurrence (Isa 59:5, 6) refers to a spider’s web, and, therefore, לנשאזרקרן might be translated, “to the one who wears a girdle of threads.” Seow interpreted this as a “tattered girdle”, but the imagery may just as easily be of fine/costly threads.

Line 12–13

The syntax here is difficult, but the most promising solution seems to be McCarter’s suggestion that this is an

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alternating sequence of active and passive participles (for a similar construction, cf. Isa 28:13). However, reference should also be made to Victor Sasson’s suggestion that might be interpreted in the context of performance, as marking a new section of the text, in which Balaam turns to address his audience directly. That is, might be interpreted as an infinitive absolute with imperative force: “Consider! Think! And consider!” Unfortunately, the damage to the subsequent lines precludes certainty.

**Line 13**

— The ink is almost entirely effaced at this point and I am dependent on the readings of Hoftijzer and van der Kooij.

**Line 14**

— Hoftijzer interpreted as a *pe’al* plural participle from *dwhq* (cf. Aram. דָּעִים), “to be in distress”, treating it as the object of with כָּל as the subject; i.e. “and all suffered oppression”. The couplet was thereby left to begin a new clause. Lipiński also interpreted on the basis of *dwhq*, but restored “...and the fool”, rather than כָּל. Consequently, he translated the line: “[...and] the fool saw perturbations. Šaggar and Aštar did not...” Caquot and Lemaire, on the other hand, interpreted together as the object of the verb: “[e]t tous voient restraint (עיסי)

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189 Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II*, 137–38. Note also the possibility noted by Lipinski, that might be a plural noun, designating a species of bird, perhaps a species of pelican.
le croît des bovins et des ovin" (see below).  

Yet another possibility was proposed by McCarter, who identified שגר with *qdy. “to decree” (cf. Arab. قرر), and interpreted it as a plural participle with שעשתר as the object; i.e. “and everyone has seen those things that decree offspring and young.”  

Finally, Hackett, also restored כל instead of כל before the 3.c.p. verb עשתר, and understood כל in light of BH שוג, “restrain, oppress”: i.e. “[...] a fool see visions. The constraint of fertility (lit.: offspring).”  

The disagreement about how to interpret the line stems, to a large extent, from the interpretation of שעשתר. On the one hand are those who follow Hoftijzer and interpret both nouns as DNN: Šagar-and-ʿAštar; on the other are those who prefer to interpret the expression in light of Deut 7:13; 28:4, 18, 51 as a reference to fertility: e.g. “offspring and young”. Now, while both שגר and שעשתר are attested as DNN, the divine pairing שגר ועשה́ת́ר is unparalleled outside of Deuteronomy. Consequently, I prefer to translate the expression שעשתר in light of the attested biblical usage. As Hackett noted, this seems to fit well within the context. I have, therefore, opted above to  

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Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAlla, 54.  


Cf. the discussion in Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 273–74.
follow Lemaire’s 1985 translation: “et tous ont vu restreints la progéniture et la fécondité”, which agrees with biblical usage and supplies a comparatively straightforward translation of the text.196

Be that as it may, the pairing שגר and עשתר in both the DAPT and in biblical usage should probably be ultimately understood as hypostases of the fertility deities.197 Hence, even if שגר and עשתר are understood as DNN, I.14 should still be understood as an allusion to the restriction of fertility as a result of the plague decreed in I.6–7.

Finally, it should be noted (following Hackett) that the 3.m.p. verb חזו may have oracular overtones (cf. the use of both חזי, I.1 and ראיה, I.5, suggesting that חזה had a technical meaning).198

Line 15

הקרקת—For the interpretation of הקרקת as the C-stem perf. of *дрק (cf. Aram. חזר), “to flee”, see Hoftijzer.199

5.1.1.1. COMBINATION I: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Combination I describes a nocturnal revelation beheld by Balaam, son of Beor, “a man who was a seer of the gods”. Unfortunately, the message conveyed by the gods is no longer legible. Whatever the case, the revelation leaves Balaam extremely perturbed (I.3–4). Concerned, Balaam’s people come to him and he narrates for them the calamity that will soon befall: a period of darkness and drought (I.4–7). What follows in

196 Trans.: “and all have seen the restriction of offspring and fertility,” Lemaire, “Les inscriptions de Deir ʿAlla et la littérature araméenne antique”, 281.
197 Cf. the discussion of the demythologised Deuteronomistic conceptualisation in Keel and Uehlinger, Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel, 147–49.
198 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā, 54.
199 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 197, 219, esp. n.99.
I.7ff. is a description of the upheaval of the natural order, characterised by a series of abnormal behaviours.

A small gambolling bird is said to scorn birds of prey (I.7–8). The ostrich, which in biblical tradition is a symbol of parental neglect, is said in one instant to care for the young of the hawk and in the next to harm the chicks of the heron.200 The swallow is said to attack the dove and the sparrow (I.8–9). The lines following the bird section (I.9ff.) are fragmentary, but it appears that the disruption of the natural order continues through the end of the extant text of Combination I.

In I.14 there is a probable reference to the restriction of procreation and fertility, and this appears to be a consequence of the drought foretold in I.6–7 and the reason for Balaam’s despair. Significantly, this interpretation is consistent with the references to migratory birds in I.7–9. Even today, the Jordan Valley is renowned among ornithologists for the seasonal migration of birds (including species that nest in the region), especially at the beginning of spring and summer (cf. Jer 8:7). Indeed, the eminent Victorian naturalist Henry Tristram described the vernal migration as follows:

The thickets abounded in francolin, while the valley itself seems to be the highway of all the migratory birds returning from their African winter quarters to western Asia and Russia. Bands of storks, masses of starlings, clouds and swallows, long lines of swifts and bee-eaters may be seen hour after hour ceaselessly passing northwards overhead, while the surface of the plain is alive with countless myriads of familiar songsters in loose scattered order, hopping, feeding, taking short flights, but all pursuing their northward course.201

200 This image is especially strange in view of the fact that the flightless ostrich builds its nest in a shallow depression in the ground, while the hawk and the heron build their nests in trees, on cliff faces and, in the case of the heron, reed beds (see Appendix F pl.5b). This is consistent with the mundus inversus motif throughout this section.
It is probably against this vibrant background that we should read the references to the “young of the hawk”, the “chicks of the heron”, and perhaps the “nest of the vulture” in I.8 (note also the apparent reference to “ewes” I.9, and “the piglet” and “the young of…” I.15). If so, then the unifying theme of Combination I is related to fertility and the destitution brought about as a result of the plague (cf. I.14).

In addition, the references to migratory birds give the DAPT a local flavour. And while it does not necessarily follow that the DAPT were composed locally, the fact that the imagery is well suited to the environmental context of Deir ‘Alla, suggests, at the very least, that the inhabitants at the site probably felt a direct connection with the text(s), either as a prophecy directed to their own times, or a tradition inherited from their ancestors (see below).

In broad terms, Combination I may be identified as a prophecy of judgement corresponding to the basic pattern: announcement + result, or announcement + justification. Alternatively, Combination I might be viewed as a dream report, with an interpretation followed by a description of the oracular dream. In this case, the withholding of the description might be for dramatic effect, building anticipation and perhaps serving double duty to characterise the consequences of the plague ordained in I.6–7. Another view was espoused by Blum, who argued that Combination I comprised a sapiential work subsumed in a prophetic apophthegm.

ʿAlla in early April, numerous small birds could still be seen and heard in the bushes that surround the tell, while larger birds could be seen overhead in the valley.


204 Blum, “Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir ’Alla”, 573–98. On the parallel between the motif of mundus inversus of in I.7ff. and sapiential traditions
According to Blum, this conflated text should be understood in the context of scribal education, serving to acculturate the local elite in the service of the Aramean governor (for the geo-political context of the DAPT see §7.4). As discussed above, Blum may have overstated the case for the incongruence of the two parts of Combination I, and in the next chapter it will be argued that the linguistic evidence does not necessarily support his political interpretation (see esp. §6.5), but there may yet be some merit to the suggestion that the DAPT would have been encountered in the context of scribal education.\(^\text{205}\) However, as has already been discussed (cf. §4.5), this cannot be confirmed.

By its nature, the prophetic narrative has its resolution in a specific temporal point or event (i.e. the fulfillment of the prophecy). This finite perspective raises the question, what could be the motivation to set the account in writing? Two principal alternatives suggest themselves: (a) to warn of an oracle that was yet to be fulfilled; or (b) the desire to memorialise a successful prognostication. It is also possible that in the course of transmission and reception the focus might have shifted from one to the other if the prophecy was perceived to be fulfilled. Ultimately we cannot know which alternative is correct. However, the fact that the superscription in I.1 foregrounds Balaam (the man), rather than his prophecy, suggests that it was the Balaamite tradition(s) that was important.\(^\text{206}\) That is, in addition to the specific prophecy, the superscription has an evocative or metonymic quality, transcending the text and recalling all that the audience knew and felt about the seer Balaam. This traditional refferentiality might give preference to the former

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\(^{206}\) Contrast the superscriptions in Isa 1:1, and Obad 1:1 which focus attention on the vision; and Jer 1:1; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1, which focus attention on the divine word.

(eespecially the Egyptian Admonitions of Ipuwer), see already Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla, 75–76.
option. Be that as it may, both alternatives are essentially commemorative. Hence, although Combination I is a record of a prophecy, the significance of the inscription lies in its enduring importance, and indeed relevance, to its audience.

There is no way of knowing whether the DAPT relates to an historical oracle (as opposed to a fictional one), nor is it clear from Combination I whether the DAPT were intended for a human audience, or whether they served an apotropaic function—perhaps warding against the actuation or recurrence of the calamities (cf. the discussion of the sphinx-like icon in §7.6.2). But in the next section it will be argued that Combination II contains a possible reference to oral transmission (II.17). This might indicate that the DAPT were drawn from (oral) folk traditions rather than a de novo composition. If so, the act of writing on the walls separates the oracular utterance from its original performance and transmission context(s) (see the discussion of דּו in I.4). As such, irrespective of whether the tradents at Deir ‘Alla can be identified as the original recipients of the oracle, and regardless of whether the Vorlage from which it was copied was composed in another time and place, the materiality of the inscription reorients the message, framing it within the immediate confines of the bench-room and extending to the text situational associations related to the use of that space, and inversely colouring the experience of the room through association with the Balaamite oracle. We will return to these matters in Chapter 7, but for now it will suffice to reiterate that the act of transcribing the prophetic text(s) onto the walls testifies to its enduring importance.

207 This is also true in the case of Blum’s arguments, just removed by a further stage.
5.1.2. Combination II

Although the fragments of Combination II are more easily aligned than Combination I, no single line is complete to the end, and this has meant that the interpretation of this combination is even less certain. Adding to this uncertainty, it is unclear whether the two combinations belong to a single narrative, or to multiple narratives. On v(q) there is a small space which was apparently intentionally left blank. The placement of this fragment is not certain, but a position at the end of Combination I seems likely. This suggests some sort of section division or paragraphing, implying that the narrative of the first combination did not flow directly onto Combination II; but, ultimately, impressions pertaining to the relationship of the two combinations depend on the criterion of thematic continuity.

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208 See, for example, the discussion in André Lemaire, “La disposition originelle des inscriptions sur plâtre de Deir ‘Alla”, SEL 3 (1986): 86, who preferred the reconstruction of two columns with Combination I coming after(!) Combination II.

209 See the discussion in Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 159, 169, and the photograph on pl.13.
Fig. 5.3—Combination II
1. [...] 
2. [...] 
3. ate [...] (of) 
4. his youth; sated with love like [...] and he/they said 
5. to him “the sprout and the soil containing succulents (?) [...] 
6. Let him [not] be sated, let him/it not pass over to the eternal dwelling place (viz. the grave) [...] 
7. the house for the use of the traveller, and for the use of the bridegroom; the name of the house [...] 

210 Or, “let El be sated, let him pass over to the eternal dwelling place (viz. the grave) [...]”
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>and wormrot from the grave (?). From the thighs of men and from the legs of [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>[...] surely he has not sought council from you; he has not sought the advice of the one who sits [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>[...] you will cover with a single garment. If you hate him, he will grow ill; if you [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I will place [my hand (?)] under your head. You will lie down on the bed of your youth for the portion of (?) [...]212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>[...] in their heart(s). The scion sighs to himself (lit. in his heart). He sighs [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>[...] sacrifices (?)213 [...] he will not cause them to return. Death will [no longer] take the newborn infant (lit. the suckling of the womb) and the suckling of [...]214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>[...] his name [...] the heart of the scion is weak, for he has come (?) to [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>To complete215 [...] a sacrifice, a mare (?),216 and the bereaved [...]217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>[...] you asked, saying [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Heed the account! speak [to retain (?)] on your own tongue: a judgement and a chastisement. Say [...].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I have punished the king(s?) [...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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211 Or, “the house the traveller will not enter, and the house the bridegroom will not enter, there [...]”.
212 Or, “your eternal bed”.
213 Or, “our king”.
214 Or, “death will take….”.
215 Or, “to his/the end”.
216 Or, “or the king his horse/a mare”.
217 Or, “and he asked”; or, “and his request”; or, “and (he) lay (with)”.
Lines 3–4

עלמה may be translated ‘ōlām, “eternity” (with pronominal suffix, cf. הבית ועלמה, idiom. “his grave”, Qoh 12:5); ‘ālūm, “youth” (with pronominal suffix, cf. Ps 89:45 [Heb. 46]; צלוומין; Prov 30:19, where the LXX has ἐν νεότητι); ‘elem, “young man” (with pronominal suffix, cf. אישו, I Kgs 20:20; נעריו, Ruth 2:14, etc.);218 or ‘almāh, “young woman.”219

In the Hebrew Bible the noun ועלמה, “young man,” is attested twice, once in a description of the youthful David, still in the house of his father and considered too young to join battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 17:56); once to describe the page-boy who accompanies Jonathan to fetch his arrows (1 Sam 20:22).

In Exod 2:8 עלמה refers to the young sister of the infant Moses. In Isa 7:14 it is clear that an ועלמה may also be of childbearing age (cf. Isa 54:4), and in Gen 24:43 she is a suitable candidate for marriage.220

In Job 20:11 and 33:25 עלמה denotes youthful vigour, but Ps 88:45 (Heb. 46) refers to the cutting short of “the days of his youth” (הקצרת ימי ועלומיו).

Consequently, it seems that עלמה refers to a young man or woman who is unmarried (cf. Isa 54:4, where בשת ועלומיך, “the shame of your

218 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā, 29, 56. Note that Hackett interprets this as “his son”.


220 In this context it makes no difference whether the עלמה in Isa 7:14 is understood to be a virgin or not. The references to עלמה in 1 Chron 15:20; Ps 68:25 [Heb. 26]; Song 1:3, 8:6; and the superscription to Ps 46, are all ambiguous, but it seems from the context that all refer to young women.
youth”, paralleled with הָרָה יָנָה, “the disgrace of your widowhood”, both in the context of childlessness; i.e. the spinster and the childless widow) and still belongs to their parent’s household or is under the care of a guardian (cf. 1 Sam 20:22). Significantly, this definition is broadly compatible with the pattern of usage in the cognate languages.221

Based on a combination of biblical and cognate sources, Botterweck, et al. (TDOT) proposed an alternative definition in which עלמה (and its cognates) specifically denotes a foreign woman.222 However, while in some instances עלמה may refer to ethnicity (cf. גִּלֵּט KTU 1.24, 7; עלמה, Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8 in the sense of a resident alien; and conceivably, although not for any internal reasons, 1 Chron 15:20; Ps 46:1; Ps 68:25; Prov 30:19: Song 1:3; 8:6), this definition does not account for the reference to David as an עלם (1 Sam 17:56), and it seems ill-suited to the עלמה of Isaiah 54:4 (why would a foreigner be singled out at this point?).223 Moreover, it does not account for כלם which is used in contexts that clearly refer to youth, rather than ethnicity (cf. Job 33:25, where כלם stands in parallelism with נַעַר). Furthermore, it should be noted that עלמה is not used to denote a foreigner in other contexts where it would surely be most apposite (cf. the description of Ruth as a נַעַר, Ruth 2:5). It can be concluded,

222 Cf. ibid, 154–63.
223 This might be explained as an abstraction of the etymology proposed by Botterweck, et al., leading to the lexicalisation of the meaning “youth”. However, this is not made explicit in the discussion in TDOT (in fact Isa 54:4 is ignored by Botterweck, et al.), and the arguments of Botterweck, et al., that the עלמה in Song 1:3; 8:6 should be identified as foreign women (i.e. in accordance with the proposed etymology) rather tells against this interpretation—although due allowance should be made for differences owing to the regional/temporal divide that may separate these passages. The uncertainty relating to the provenance of Song of Songs especially renders categorical statements impossible in this matter.
therefore, that while a foreigner might be an הערמה, an הערמה need not be a foreigner.

In light of the above definition of הערמה as a young man or woman who is unmarried, there is little reason to expect that the expression רוּם, “sated with love” (see below), applied to eitherʾelem, orʾalmāḥ.

This leaves two alternatives:ʾolām, “eternity,” orʾālūm, “youth.” In either case, on the basis of the 3.m.s. pronominal suffix ה, it is necessary to restore a transitive verb followed by a noun in the construct state at the end of II.3. If הערמה is related toʾolām, then the restoration of בית עולם might be justified based on the expression בית עולם in II.6 (although it should be noted that in II.6 עולם is plural); e.g. השם [לך הבית] שלמה, “he has entered his eternal dwelling place,” or השם [לך הבית] שלמה, “to approach his eternal dwelling place,” etc. However, if הערמה is identified withʾālūm, then it is possible to restore something along the lines, לא זכרת ימי עולם, “he has forgotten the days of his youth” (cf. Ezek 16:22, referring to infancy, in the context of lost sexual purity). Given the semantic continuity between the expression רוּם, “sated with love” (II.4), andمشכבי עולם, “the beds of your youth” (II.11),ʾālūm is the preferable option.

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225 Note that in the Hebrew Bible עולם always occurs with a pronominal suffix: three times with the 3.m.s. (Job 20:11; 33:25; Ps 89:46), once with the 2.f.s. (Isa 54:4).

226 Hackett, The Balaaam Text from DeirʿAllā, 22, 56.
analysed as a m.p. construct participle, a feminine imperative, factitive (D-stem), or as an adjective (cf. BH רוה).  

For the pairing of ח and דו, with probable sexual connotations, cf. Prv. 7:18, “Come! Let us satiate ourselves with love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love”.

Lines 4–5

Blum interpreted לָמָּה as an interrogative particle introducing a series of questions and responses about the transience of life; however, on the the interpretation of לָמָּה as a discourse marker, see I.4 above. It is probable that לָמָּה identifies the object after a verb of address; i.e.: “[and they(?) said] to him/her”. However, Lipiński has proposed the speculative restoration: ויאמר לָמָּה [ויאמר ל] וִיאמר, “[and he spoke?] to the maid(en],” which is also plausible.

Hoftijzer, understanding this section to contain a series of curses, read בָּר as a G-stem passive participle (בָּר, “to pierce, hollow”), which he interpreted figuratively to mean “a blinded one” (cf. Num 16:14; Judg 16:21; 1 Sam 11:2; Prov 30:17). However, in the context it is

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228 Cf. Prov 5:19, where Hoftijzer reads בָּר instead of בָּרָה; Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla*, 221.


preferable to follow either Caquot and Lemaire (followed also by Hackett and others) and identify נזר with BH נזר, “sprout, shoot, scion”, 232 or Levine and read *nḏr, “corpse” (cf. Isa. 14:19). 233 On the basis of usage later in combination II (II.12, II.14), it seems that Hackett’s “scion” is the more likely reading (see below).

The next word is also difficult. Most have followed van der Kooij and Hoftijzer and read רִיבָר. 234 Hackett’s suggestion that ריבר might be a cognate of BH חַרְמָם, “pyre, pile of wood” (cf. Isa 30:33; Ezek 24:9) is interesting, especially in light of her suggestion that there may be an association with child sacrifice later in Combination II (see below). 235 However, the evidence for this is far from certain, and at present it seems preferable to follow Hoftijzer and interpret ריבר in light of Syriac מְדַר, “soil, earth”; or BA מִדָּר, “dwelling place” (cf. Dan 2:11; 4:22, 29; 5: 21). 236 Arabic مدر, means “to plaster with clay or mud,” which suggests that the former two acceptations might be etymologically

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232 Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ‘Alla”, 202; cf. Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla, 57, 91. As Caquot and Lemaire observed, there is ample evidence for the orthographic realisation *d = q, in the DAPT, cf. קבֵּס (I.10); קחק (I.11); והקר (I.15), and possibly קק ”restrain” (I.14).


234 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 121, 222.


236 Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 222; compare also, the construct noun מְדַרְבַּבַל, “water-courses, drains of Babylon”, BT Bek 44b.
related, perhaps denoting a dwelling plastered in clay or mud. As such, it is interesting to note the adobe structure in which the DAPT was located (see §7.3.5.).

Aḥituv, translated: “the dwelling containing foliage”, comparing the imagery to Song of Songs 1:16b–17: “our couch is lush; the beams of our house are cedars, our rafters are pines”. He likened this imagery to descriptions of Inanna’s couch in the Sumerian love poetry “the people will set up my fruitful bed, they will cover it with plants (the color of) duru-lapis lazuli”, and “my enduring house which floats like a cloud…a fruitful bed, lapis bedecked…his reed-filled house…” If the DN in I.6 is understood to be Šaušga (= Ishtar), then this indirect association with Inanna (= Ishtar) is particularly interesting. However, Aḥituv’s interpretation goes beyond the evidence.

—Following Hackett, and interpreting כֶל, “to contain, enclose.”

—Cf. Job 8:16, where is used of a lush plant: “he is succulent before the sun, spreading his shoots over his garden”; Job 24:8, “with the rain of the mountains they are wet.”

If I.6 is understood to refer to a period of drought, then the imagery of fertility and new growth in II.5 might suggest a connection between the two combinations (see below).

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237 Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 222, n.106.
238 Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 18, 23–24.
239 Aḥituv, Echoes From the Past, 458
Lines 5–6

may be translated either as a DN, that is: “El will pass over”, or as the negative particle governing the jussive: “let him not pass over”. If the latter, then, in the interest of balance, it may also be desirable to supply the negative particle before .

Interpreting the DAPT as an excerpt from an ancient El repertoire (see below), Levine proposed the restoration: , “El sates himself with lovemaking”. He translated the following clause: “then El built an eternal home”; reading , rather than . However, objected that the use of , meaning “to do, make” (I.5), makes unlikely.

Line 6

The acceptation “grave, tomb” is well established for the expression , and is attested in Hebrew, Punic and later Aramaic sources. However, as noted by Caquot and Lemaire, it is also possible to read , “a/the house of youths” (see above).

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243 Cf. , The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā, 59–60; cf. also Caquot and Lemaire’s less likely proposal that reflects a paratactic spelling of ( sailors, “and these.”


247 , Echoes From the Past, 458.


The next word, beginning *bêt yôd*, may be restored either as a prepositional phrase [בֵית יַד “by day”, or as a noun, בֵית. This latter was preferred by Levine, who suggested that after בֵית֯עלָם there originally stood a series of three descriptive statements, each beginning with בֵית (cf. Deut 8:7–9; 11:11–12, in which occurs a sequence of descriptive statements introduced by ארץ, “land”).

*Line 7*

The negative proclitic affixed to the verb (cf. §6.1.8) suggests that לֵילָה is unlikely to be the jussive, and is therefore probably an imperfect derived from לָלָל, “to enter”, rather than לָלָל, “to go up, ascend”. Alternatively, Caquot and Lemaire identified לֵילָה with BH לִיעל, “to help, be of use”, and translated the line “une maison pour l’utilité du voyageur, et pour l’utilité du fiancé, le nom de – ou là (est) – la maison...”. The decision as to which alternative to adopt is ultimately subjective.

For the translation לֶלֶך, “traveller”, cf. וְיָבָא הֶלֶךְ לֵא־ישׁ עַרְשִׁי, “the traveller came to the rich man” (2 Sam 12:4).

*Line 8*

The interpretation of II.8 depends, to a large extent, on the translation of the expression שם הַרְּמָה. הַרְּמָה פֵּרָה. מש. דָּוִד *Ḥātituv, Echoes From the Past*, 459.

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251 Pace Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā*, 60–61, and n.66.
252 Trans.: “a house for the use of the traveler, and the use of the bridegroom, the name of – or there (is) – the house...,” Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ʿAlla”, 203; cf. Rofé, *The Book of Balaam*, 68, who identified this as a house of sacred prostitution (see below). As Lipiński observed the placement of שם corresponds to the usual syntax of a relative clause with a verb; Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II*, 145–46. But either translation is viable.
253 Levine, *Numbers* 21–36, 259 (note that Levine incorrectly cited this as 1 Sam 12:4); cf.  "Echoes From the Past", 459.
Hackett, Levine, and Lipiński) interpreted מַדֶּשׁ כְּשֶׁ בִּלְתִיּוֹן (בִּלְתִיּוֹן, מַדֶּשׁ) in light of Job 21:32 to mean “grave, mound” (cf. Arab. حَدِث, “grave”), and translated מָדֶשׁ as rimma, “worm, maggot”, giving the phrase: “the worm from the grave”. As Hoftijzer observed, similar expressions, combining מָדֶשׁ with a word for grave occur in Isa 14:9–11; Job 17:14; 21:26 (cf. also Sir 10:11). However, it should be noted that the expression “the worm from the grave” sits somewhat uneasily with the following expression “from the thighs of men and from the legs”;

Another possibility was proposed by Abituv, who likewise interpreted מָדֶשׁ as “worm”, but noted that מַדֶּשׁ might be translated “stack of grain” (cf. Exod 22:5; Judg 15:5; Job 5:26), suggesting that this line could be interpreted as a curse, according to which the harvest would be affected.

Another possibility was proposed by Caquot and Lemaire, who interpreted מָדֶשׁ as “misfortune, fate”, and parsed מָדֶשׁ as a feminine participle from מָדֶשׁ, מָדֶשׁ “to arise”, giving them the translation “rising up from misfortune”. However, the difficulty with this solution lies in identifying the feminine subject of the verb. While it is conceivable that the subject could have been introduced in the lacuna at the end of II.7, there is no indication that a feminine subject continues later in II.8.

Yet another alternative is to identify מָדֶשׁ with Heb. מָדֶשׁ (Aram. מָדֶשׁ; Arab. مُدَعَّل), “to throw, cast down”. In this case it might be preferable

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256 Abituv, Echoes From the Past, 460.
to follow Ahituv and translate גדש as “stack of grain”. Contextually, the Dp-stem is to be preferred for רמה; i.e. “it was cast down from the stack of grain”.

Finally, passing reference should also be made to Lemaire’s 1985 translation, in which he interpreted מַן as a comparative: “et sa hauteur plus qu’une meule, plus que les hanches d’un homme et plus que des cuisses...”; although, he did not explain his translation of גדש as “millstone”. 258 For the translation of מַן as “legs” and “thighs”, see below.

Commentators are unanimous that מַן marks the beginning of a new clause, but beyond that interpretations are divided. Hoftijzer identified פחז with Arab. فخذ, “thigh” (see below), which in Classical Arabic can be used metaphorically as a tribal subdivision connoting close kinship. He therefore read: “From the tribes of men”. 259 However, there is no additional evidence to support this metaphorical usage in any ancient Near Eastern context. Alternatively, Levine, citing פחז כמים “unstable as water”, in Gen 49:4, translated the clause “from the reckless affairs of men”. 260 Meanwhile Hackett, following a suggestion from Cross, cited 4QSamb (1 Sam 20:34) where פחז is used to translate כם in the MT (4QSamb: ויקם יונתן מעלשלחן; MT: ויפחזיונתן מעלשלחן), on the strength of which she

258 Trans.: “and its height is more than a millstone, more than the hips of a man and more than thighs...” Lemaire, “Les inscriptions de Deir ‘Alla et la littérature araméenne antique”, 276.


260 Levine, “The Deir ‘Alla Plaster Inscriptions”, 200, 201; idem, *Numbers 21–36*, 259–60. However, on the interpretation of מַן in Gen 49:4, see §5.1.2.1, n.352.
translated פחז as a participle meaning “those who rise up (from the underworld) among human beings.”

A fourth option, preferred by Alexander Rofé, is to identify פחז literally with Arab. פخذ, “thigh” (cf. פחדঃ, Tg. Onq. Lev 21:20, “testicles” = Heb. פחד, “thigh” Job 40:17). As Delbert Hillers has discussed, the semantic range of this noun can be extended to cover the male reproductive organ and metaphorically, in the sense adopted by Hoftijzer above, it is frequently used to refer to progeny.

As Lipiński observed, the interpretation פחז = “thigh” is further supported by נשאר, which can be translated “legs of” (cf. BH נשאר; Arab. סאך), enabling one to restore the balanced reading: “from the thighs of men and from the legs of…” Given the possible reference to someone being cast down to the grave at the beginning of II.8 (רמות קטן וنشرד), perhaps this clause contains the counterpart referring to someone (a saviour figure?) rising up (viz. being born), or perhaps it is a further reference to death of the young (cf. I.14; II.13).

But this is not the only possible reading. Hackett (following McCarter), related נשאר to Syr. אמצע, “mound, sarcophagus”, although she noted that in Syriac the noun is feminine, while in the DAPT it is masculine, whereas Hoftijzer identified נשאר with Aram. שער, “street, market place”,

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265 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā, 63.
and translated the second half of the line, “from the tribes of mankind and from the places (?) of...”

Levine, on the other hand, saw a possible parallel with Ps 147:10: לא בַּשֵׁךְ הָאֵישׁ רְצוֹן, which he translated “the lustful desires of men”, proposing that שָׁךְ be related to BH תַּשָּׁךְ, “desire” (cf. Gen 3:16; 4:7; Song 7:11).

**Line 9**

הלעפָתָה. {בר}立ちעת. ואלמלכ. ליתמלך. לשופי.

— I agree with Hoftijzer that the disjunctive או cannot here be understood to coordinate two contrastive words or clauses. Instead, he interpreted ה- and או as asseverative particles, translating the line: “as to counsel one will not ask you for it, and as to advice one will not ask (you) for it.”

The identification of מלכה with the common Aramaic root meaning “counsel” is seemingly assured by the parallelism with ע臟ת, “counsel,” in the preceding clause (for ריתיע, “plan, advise”, cf. ṭערים, plan, advise; Isa 8:10); however, Lipiński has argued that ליתיע and לייתיע may also be related to either Aram. עיר, “to rebel,” or Arab.عص, “to be difficult, intricate”. In this case, מלכה might be understood in light of Canaanite מלכ, “to rule”; i.e. “To rebel against you, will he not plot or, to reign himself, will he not take over?”

Note the change to the second person (ךך), indicating direct speech. The subject of the pronoun may be either Balaam—perhaps continuing the

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discourse commenced in II.5—or the audience (albeit addressed individually, see below).\textsuperscript{270}

Line 10

In view of the difficulty in identifying the letter traces, I have opted to follow Hackett and leave the beginning of the line untranslated.\textsuperscript{271} Caquot and Lemaire restored the noun בֶן[כ]שֵׁם, which they identified as a plural cognate of Heb. מִשְׁגָּב, “high place, refuge”.\textsuperscript{272} Alternatively, Levine, proposed the restoration: בֶן[כ]שֵׁם, noting that forms of the verb שָׁכְב occur elsewhere in Combination II.\textsuperscript{273} However, there is no trace of a kāp’s tail visible below the line.

Hoftijzer analysed the verbs תכסן and תשנען as 2.m.s. impf., with energic nûn.\textsuperscript{274} Alternatively, Caquot and Lemaire parsed the verbs as 2.m.s. impf., with 1.c.s. or 1.c.p. pronominal suffix.\textsuperscript{275} Hackett similarly explained the forms as 2.m.s. but argued for a 3.m.s. object suffix, preceded by energetic nûn.\textsuperscript{276} The simplest explanation, however, is that the verbs are 2.f.p. or 3.f.p. impf.\textsuperscript{277}

For the translation of וַיֵאָנַש, compare the nip’al hapax וַיֵאָנַש, “he became ill,” (2 Sam 12:15).

Line 11

\textsuperscript{270} Levine, Numbers 21–36, 260.
\textsuperscript{271} Cf. Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā, 63.
\textsuperscript{274} Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 297–98.
\textsuperscript{275} Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ‘Alla”, 204.
\textsuperscript{276} Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā, 65–66.
\textsuperscript{277} Cf. Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 147–48, who interpreted II.9 as warnings directed to a king, and II.10 as counsels addressed to the young woman of II.4.
The first word in the line is poorly preserved. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij restored אָשֶׁם, 1.c.s. impf. “I will place”; however, Hoftijzer left the first part of the line untranslated.278 Alternatively, Caquot and Lemaire restored אָשֶׁת, “woman”,279 and, in an unpublished view, McCarter (reportedly) read אָשֶׁה, “someone”.280 Following there is a short lacuna and then the words אָשֶׁת ראַשֶׁך. Hoftijzer proposed two possible interpretations for this expression. The first option is to translate אָשֶׁת ראַשֶך as a prepositional phrase meaning, “under your head”. The second option is to treat אָשֶׁת as a passive verbal form from √חתת, “to scatter, break”, and to translate the phrase along the lines “your head will be shattered”—a sentiment that has good biblical parallels.281 However, in light of the subsequent verb תשׂכֶב, “you will lie down”, the former option must be deemed preferable.

The text between אָשֶם and אָשֶׁת has been almost entirely effaced, but there is space for about three letters and Lemaire (followed by Lipiński) has proposed the restoration יָד, “his hand”, with the 3rd person pronominal suffix agreeing with the 3rd person masculine object of the preceding line. However, if the first word in the line is understood to be the 1.c.s. verb אָשֶם, then the first person יָד, “my hand”, is also possible.282 For the pairing of hand and head with erotic connotations, cf. שמאלוַתחתראשי “his left hand is under my head” (Song 2:6; 8:3).283

עַלְמִיך is commonly translated in light of ביתעלמן (II.6), to mean “eternal bed”, and is understood as a continuation of

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281 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 235.
283 I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Llewelyn for these references.
the mortuary imagery (II.6, 8); 284 cf. Hoftijzer: “you will sleep the sleep of death”; 285 Hackett: “you will lie down on your eternal bed”; 286 Lipiński: “you will lie down on your eternal couches”; 287 Levine: “you shall lie on your eternal bedding”; 288 Seow: “you will lie down on your eternal bed”. 289

As Hackett noted, the references to placing something under the subject’s head and to an “eternal bed” may have ritualistic connotations; although she acknowledged that the change to the second person address directed to the deceased seems somewhat abrupt.

Caquot and Lemaire, in keeping with their interpretation of Combination II as a whole, interpreted the expression מְשֶבֶךְ עֲלֵמִיךָ as referring to a bed of youth (cf. Lev 18:22 and 20:13; see below). Accordingly, although they were unable to translate the line, they suggested that it might relate to advice or some sort of ritual for the conservation of youthful virility. 290 Subsequently, Lemaire has offered the translation: “tu coucheras comme tu couchais dans ta jeunesse pour partager…” 291 And indeed, comparison with מְשֶבֶךְ elsewhere in biblical and epigraphic sources suggests that this general interpretation is to be preferred (see §5.1.2.1).

עֲלֵמִיךָ—According to the popular interpretation eternal resting place, עֲלֵמִיךָ must be translated as a suffixed plural noun derived from ʿôtâm.

285 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 180.
287 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 142.
However, this flies in the face of attested usage. In the epigraphic corpus, Hofijzer and Jongeling only cited one additional (Palmyrene) instance of ‘ʿōlām with pronominal suffix.\(^{292}\) The greatest concentration of examples by far occurs in the Hebrew Bible. But even there, out of 438 occurrences, only occurs x12 (less than 3%) as a plural (whether in the past, cf. Ps 77:6; Isa 51:9; Ezek 1:10; or in perpetuity I Kgs 8:13 = 2 Chron 6:2; Ps 61:5; 77:8; 145:13; Qoh 1:10; Isa 26:4; 45:17 x2; Dan 9:24). Only once does it occur in a suffixed form (Qoh 12:5); although, it is perhaps significant that this occurs in the context of death: “because man must go to his eternal home” (cf. Deir ʿAlla II.6). On the other hand, “youth,” is only attested x4 in the Hebrew Bible, but every time it occurs as a suffixed nomen rectum in a construct chain. Three times it occurs with the 3.m.s. pronominal suffix, “days of his youth” (Ps 89:46; Job 20:11; 33:25; cf. the synonymous expressions: Qoh 11:9; 12:1; Ezek 16:22, 43, 60), and once with the 2.m.s. pronominal suffix, “the shame of your youth”.\(^{293}\)

\(\text{ขาดלכ—ขาดלכ}\) has been translated “for the portion of” (cf. BH, Aram. \(\text{חלק—חלק}\), or “to die” (cf. Ug. \(\text{חלק—חלק}\)).

Caquot and Lemaire offered no explanation for \(\text{חלק—חלק}\) that would agree with their translation of the first half of the line.\(^{296}\) However, given the

\(^{292}\) Hofijzer and Jongeling, “\(\text{Laugh}\) Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions, vol.2, 589, admittedly they were also only able to adduce one instance of ‘\(\text{_allum}\) with pronominal suffix (862); however, this noun is attested far fewer times overall.


well documented phonological merger *d > q elsewhere in the DAPT (see §6.3.1), I tentatively propose that could possibly be identified with the conjectural root, √*hld, “to procreate, inseminate”. In BH the dual noun, “loins”, is attested a number of times in the context of procreation: cf. המלכים מחלציך, “kings shall come from your loins” (Gen 35:11); רואים אמך הודו מחלציך והאריךevity המתי לשמך, “but the son who will come from your loins will build the house for my name” (1 Kgs 8:19 = 2 Chron 6:9); אסימל פור מדות ערית הלבר דווי שיד הלבר ימים, “Does a man bear (a child)? Why (then), do I see every man with his hands on his loins as though giving birth?” (Jer 30:6). This moves us into the semantic domain of procreation and fertility, and as such, √*hld, “to procreate, inseminate”, would be consistent with imagery elsewhere in Combination II; e.g. פזר, “sated with love” (II.4); פזר, (testicles?) (II.8); and משבבי שלימך, “the (sexual) beds of your youth” (II.11; cf. §5.1.2.1). According to this hypothesis, the line could be translated: “you will lie down on your bed of youth to procreate...” Admittedly, this is pure conjecture, and I include it here solely for the purpose of exploring the possibilities.

297 Cf. Isa 5:27; 11:5; 32:11, “loincloth”; Job 38:3; 40:7 “gird up your loins” (cf. כלם, prepare for battle). The meaning of Job 31:20 (Qere), אסימא רבניא הלבר, “whose loins have not blessed me,” is uncertain, but it seems to imply the inner-most person(?).

298 In particular, it should be noted that the preposition (מ) in Gen 35:11; 1 Kgs 8:19 and 2 Chron 6:9, suggest that the fertilization was achieved by male insemination (cf. the countless times that זרע, “seed,” is used not only for semen, but also for the offspring).

299 At present I am not able to adduce stronger credentials for this suggestion. There is an Ug. noun ḫlq, the meaning of which is uncertain, although it has plausibly been argued that it should be interpreted in light of modern Arabic حلق, “throat”; cf. Gary A. Rendsburg, “Modern South Arabian as a Source for Ugaritic Etymologies” JAOS 107 (1987): 628. However, in KTU II:14, 28, ḥlqm parallels brkm, “knees”; see further Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition (trans. Wilfred G.E. Watson; HO 67; Boston, Ma.: Brill, 2002), 361. However, Aram. ḫlṣ “loin”, rather suggests etymological /s/. Yet, cf. Heb., Aram. חלץ, “to divide”. Then again, it is interesting to note that the Arabic root حلق, “to
**Line 12**

The first part of this line is extremely damaged, and though van der Kooij was able to suggest several possible letter identifications, Hoftijzer declined to offer a translation. Lipiński was more bold in his restoration, and proposed:

*I shall go bind[ding] the miscarried ones and every living being in the womb.*

However, given in light of the fact that the ink has entirely faded, Lipiński’s proposals cannot be confirmed and, for the time being, the first part of II.12 is best left untranslaled.

The interpretation of בלבב is problematic. Both van der Kooij and Hackett identified traces of a possible word divider after בלבב, followed by a nûn, which was subsequently written over and partially obscured by a mem. Hoftijzer interpreted this as the interrogative מ, “who?” However, if this was simply a case of the scribe omitting the mem, then the correction would most likely have been supplied as a supralinear addition, as is the case elsewhere in the inscription. Consequently, it is preferable to follow Hackett and interpret mem as the 3.m.p. suffix, pertaining to בלבב, i.e. “in their hearts.” Hackett’s suggestion that the scribe initially skipped the suffix and began the nûn of the next word, before returning and correcting their mistake is plausible and consistent

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302 The letters are no clearer on the plaster than they are in the published photographs.
with scribal conventions throughout the DAPT.\textsuperscript{305} But, as both van der Kooij and Hackett observed, the suffix on בָּלָבָּם may in fact be קָאֶפ rather than מֵמ, in which case the sentence should probably be viewed as addressing the subject of the preceding line(s).\textsuperscript{306}

The principal difficulty in the second half of the line has to do with the interpretation of the noun נָקר and its relationship to the verb נָאנָח, “to sigh”. In keeping with their respective interpretations of II.5 (see above), Levine interpreted נָקר as “corpse”, while Caquot and Lemaire preferred to translate נָקר consistently throughout the text as “sprout, shoot”. They suggested, therefore, that נָקר should be interpreted metaphorically as in Isa 11:1; cf. Heb. צָמָח in Jer 23:5, and Phoen. שֶׁרֶש, in Larnaca inscriptions II, line 16, and III, line 3.\textsuperscript{307} Hackett preferred to translate נָקר as “scion”, observing that “the sprout sighs” is perhaps too weak a translation in this context.\textsuperscript{308}

נָאנָח may be parsed in a variety of ways depending on how the syntax of the line is construed. Hoftijzer interpreted נָאנָח as the 3.m.p. perf. N-stem √נָאנָח, “to sigh”; although he expressed unease at finding evidence of the N-stem in what he understood to be an Aramaic inscription (see §6.1.4).\textsuperscript{309} Alternatively, Caquot and Lemaire translated נָאנָח as the

\textsuperscript{305} Cf. Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā}, 68. As Hoftijzer observed, in the other instances where letters are added as a supralinear correction, the scribe was inserting forgotten signs, however in this instance, it is a question of correcting a mistake rather than an accidental omission. As there was not enough space for the insertion of the מֵמ between the בֵּט and the beginning of the next word, it seems reasonable to suppose, as Hackett suggested, that the erroneous נֶעָן was deliberately over-written as a form of erasure.

\textsuperscript{306} Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 127; Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā}, 68; cf. Lipiński, \textit{Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II}, 149.

\textsuperscript{307} Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ʿAlla”, 205.

\textsuperscript{308} Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā}, 68.

\textsuperscript{309} Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 236.
1.c.p. imperfect, interpreting the line as both a question and its answer: “dans le coeur de qui soupire le rejeton? c'est dans son coeur (à elle ?) qu'il soupiert.” Lipiński also read נאַANGES as the 1.c.p. imperfect (or, less likely, 3.m.s. jussive with proclitic nûn); although he read בלבב כְּ, rather than בלבב כְּ, which he translated as the Aramaic conjunction “when” (cf. Tell Fekherye inscription line 10, proverbs of Ahiqar 83), introducing a subordinate temporal clause: “when we shall tire out the scion in her womb.” However, if Hackett’s explanation of בלבב כְּ is accepted, then נקר must be understood as the subject of the verb, requiring that נאַANGES be interpreted as the 3.m.s N-stem.

**Line 13**

The first half of the line is in a similar condition to the preceding, and מלכן is the only word that can be read with any certainty. As discussed by Hackett, this may pertain either to a king (môlek) or to child sacrifice (mulk). Note also that the final ת might be either a plural or a possessive suffix.

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311 Trans.: “does the offspring sigh in their heart? it is in his (her?) heart he sighs,” Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ‘Alla”, 205.


Hackett noted that the C-stem of שָׁבַב is used in Job 33:0 and 2 Sam 12:23 with the meaning “to restore from the dead”.  

“suckling infant” (cf. Isa 49:15; 65:20; Job 24:9). Accordingly, the lāmed of לַישְׁבָם may be translated “the infant, just out of the mother’s womb” (viz. a newborn infant).  

Significantly, if Combination II is understood to continue from Combination I, this line may be related to the restriction of fertility in I.14. Alternatively, the lāmed of לַישְׁבָם might be interpreted as a negative proclitic (see §6.1.8), in which case, לַישְׁבָם might belong to the protasis of a conditional sentence; i.e. “if he does not return (or, cause to return), death will take the newborn infant, and the infant of...” Then again, II.13 might refer to the cessation of the calamities in Combination I, and the restitution of order: i.e. יָכוֹד מַתָּה בָּעֵל רַחֵם...לֶא...יֵעֵשׁ הָעֵד, death will [no longer] take the newborn infant and the infant of...”; cf. Isa 51:22, אֲלֵיַעַבְּדַת כֶּסֶת מַתָּה לָא לֶאֵכֵס הָעֵד, “you will no longer drink the dregs of the cup of my wrath”.


314 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allā, 70.  

315 Cf. KAI 61A2, 98.2, 99.2 and possibly 163.3, cited in Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allā, 70, n.75.  

316 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allā, 70; cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla, 180, who translated לַישְׁבָם, "the child still in (?) the womb".
Line 14

[השה]—Hackett plausibly identified השה with with a Syriac root meaning “to be weary, worn out”. 317

[אנה] can be either the second person demonstrative pronoun continuing the “you” introduced in II.10, or a 3.m.s. perfect והנה, “he has come”. 318

Line 15

[ה]—Hoftijzer, following van der Kooij’s palaeographic identifications, tentatively restored גדרטש, “plastered wall”, in the lacuna at the beginning of the line. 319 This reading is attractive in light of the plastered surface on which the inscription has been written; however, the ink is almost entirely faded at this point and, consequently, the reading is far from certain.

Note that if Combination II follows directly from Combination I קצה might be an allusion to the end of the plague introduced in I.6–7; cf. the possible reference to bereavement later in the line (see below).

Once again, Hackett noted the possibility that מלך might be understood in terms of child sacrifice, observing that the introduction of a king at this point in the inscription seems surprising. 320 However, the damaged context precludes certainty.

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317 Ibid, 71.
320 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā, 72.
Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the possible allusion to מֶלֶךְ-sacrifices alongside sacrifices of sheep and horses in the Incirli inscription.  

—Hoftijzer read [ו]ף, which he interpreted as the request of the king; i.e. “what the king asks for”. However, only שִׂינָן and לָמֶד are visible, and other restorations are possible. One option is to restore [ו]ף, related to Heb. שֶׁכֶל, “intelligence, discretion, insight”, or Heb. שֶׁכֶל, “loss, bereavement” (adj. שֶׁכֶל “bereft”). The latter would be particularly apposite following II.13. Perhaps, then, מֶלֶךְ שֶׁכֶל should be related to sacrifices to expiate the divine wrath (cf. 2 Kgs 3:27).

Other options include Heb. שֶׁךֶל, “to lie with”, or the derived noun שֶׁכֶל, “king’s consort”.

**Line 17**

—van der Kooij originally read וּף. Hoftijzer identified this with the Akkadian root parāru, which can have connotations of confusion, foolishness, or mental deficiency. But, the restoration וּף, which was first suggested by Caquot and Lemaire, fits with the visible letter traces and makes better sense in the context.

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323 Ibid, 246.

The rubric has been interpreted by Hackett and others as pertaining to the inscription itself, perhaps containing instructions for its erection (cf. McCarter’s interpretation of the rubric in I.2). Based on Hamilton’s measurements (see I.2 above), it is unlikely that the red ink of the rubric began in II.16 (no longer extant); though, the semantic content may have done so, perhaps with instructions for the writing of the text. This is consistent with the preposition + infinitive construct (לדעת) at the beginning of II.17, which is typically translated along the lines “in order that you/they may know.” However, other interpretations are possible. In the Aḥiram graffito (KAI 2), the same syntagm is used in a context that can only reasonably be understood to mean “beware!” and it is possible that this acceptation might also be extended to לדעת in II.17, with the sense “take heed!” In this case, the object ספר can be readily identified with the ספר in I.1; although, as observed above, it is interesting to note that in the story of Joseph in Genesis, the verb ספר is used several times for an oral recounting of a dream (cf. Gen 37:9, 10; 40:8, 9; 41:8, 12). Perhaps, then, ספר refers not so much to the written document, but to the dream report. In either case, the first half of the line could be interpreted as an admonition not to neglect the warning contained in the inscription (further suggesting continuity between combinations I and II). The appeal of this reading is that it accounts for the seemingly abrupt change to a 2.m.s. subject in לך.

As pointed out by Hackett, the expression על לשן, lit. “on the tongue,” suggests an oral report, presumably referring to Balaam’s retelling of his nocturnal vision. However, if לדעת is interpreted as an admonition, then perhaps על לשן should be read together with


understood as the reflexive pronoun: i.e. “on your own tongue”; for a similar sentiment, cf. הַדָּה לְאָתָה עָלֶה דֵּרֶךְ הַלְּכֹה וּבָין עַד כְּנֶךְ לֶפֶשׁ הָעָתָה הָתָרָה, “it shall be a sign to you upon your hand and a memorial between your eyes, in order that the law of YHWH may be in your mouth” (Exod 13:9).  

This leaves the question of how to restore the lacuna after דבר. Several alternatives are possible. van der Kooij read לְעַנְּוָה; although he suggested a number of potential alternative identifications. Consequently, Hackett (following McCarter) read דבר לְעַנְּוָה, “he said to his people” (cf. I.4). Accordingly, the first part of the rubric might be read: “heed the report spoken to his people!” or, if the rubric is understood to commence at II.16, “to heed the report he spoke to his people”. Alternatively, on the basis of van der Kooij’s discussion and drawing (the ink is almost entirely effaced at this point), it might also be possible to restore the verb שָׁמֵר; cf. the analogous expression: ואביו שָׁמֵר את־הָדָר, “but his father guarded the matter,” i.e. kept the matter in mind (Gen 37:11). In his reconstruction of the text, van der Kooij read a lāmed after דבר, and if this reading is correct, then שָׁמֵר should probably be restored as an infinitive construct with the lāmed indicating either manner (Joüon §124o): i.e. “heed the account … by [retaining (it)] on your own tongue”; or purpose: i.e. “heed the account … to [retain (it)] on your own tongue”. Accordingly, לְעַנְּוָה שָׁמֵר על לְשׁוֹן לְךָ, might

327 Inasmuch as the pronominal suffix in Gen 37:11 is affixed to the noun while in II.17 it is affixed to a preposition, the two expressions are not precisely analogous; however, in II.17 the addition of the prefix might be understood to underscore the transferance of the responsibility to guard the report to the text’s audience; cf. Muraoka’s centripetal lāmed in, “On the So-Called Dativus Ethicus in Hebrew;” TS 29 (1978): 495–98; see also BDB, שָׁמֵר, 515, n.h.

328 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla, 135.

329 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allâ, 73.

330 Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla, 135, and pl.30.

331 On the possibility of reading šîn, cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ’Alla, 135.
be understood as an epexegetical clause, specifying the manner in which the account is to be “heeded”; i.e. it is an injunction to transmit the tale through oral recitation.  

This just leaves דבר. Contextually the simplest option is to interpret דבר as an imperative, “speak!” In which case, we may restore the beginning of II.17 as follows, “heed the account! Speak, retain (it) on your own tongue!”

If this line of reasoning is correct, מ֯שפט and [ה] מלכה may be understood as substantives further qualifying the ספר at the beginning of the line; i.e. “Heed the account! Speak, [retain (it)] on your own tongue: a judgement and a chastisement.”

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332 For a discussion of the epexegetical use of the infinitive construct see Williams §195.
334 The abrupt change to the second person has proved somewhat vexing and has attracted numerous explanations. Thus, in an interpretation similar to that proposed above, Hackett interpreted לך as a preposition with a 2.s. pronominal suffix, and viewed this line as a direct address to the readers of the inscription (albeit individually): “to make known (lit. “to know”) the account he spoke to his people orally (lit.: “by tongue”), your judgement and your punishment”; Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allâ, 73. However, this does little to clarify the reason for the change. Alternatively, if one reads נ שפט instead of מ שפט, then לך may be read as an imperative: “come let us judge and render a verdict” (cf. Jo Ann Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allâ (HSM 31; Chico, Ca.: Scholars, 1984), 74); however, this leaves the problem of reconciling a plural imperfect with a singular imperative. Then again, מלכה might also be interpreted in light of the BH hapax legomenon מ֯מלְצַּה, “to be sweet, pleasant,” cf. מְמַלְצָה לָכָּה אָמְרָתְךָ מָדַבְּשׁ לִי, “how sweet are your words to my palate, more so than honey to my mouth.” (Ps 119:103). Given that the next word in II.17 is אמר, it might be possible to restore a D-stem 3.c.p. perfect, coordinated with the preceding imperfect: [לך] מ֯שֵּׁפיםְ מְלָכָה [אמר], “come, let us judge and render sweet word[s].” If so, then the rubric would have a more positive tenor than might otherwise be supposed. But once again this leaves the problem of reconciling a plural imperfect with a singular imperative.
Taken in this way, the rubric in II.17 may be understood as an admonition to remember and (orally) repeat the warnings. Similar admonitions occur in Exodus 13:9; 17:14; and Deuteronomy 6:6–9; 11:18–20. One also wonders whether a similar desire that a text be repeated orally lies behind Sefire IB:8–9:

ואל תשתק ההד מְצָּל פּוּר אָנָּהְו; “and let not one of the words of this treaty be silenced. [but let them be heard from] ’rqu(?) to Y d[y...], etc.”

Significantly, in each of these examples the admonition is associated with the establishment of some sort of memorial.

Finally, regardless of whether the rubric as a whole, or only in part, is understood as an admonition, the use of the second person pronoun (לך) distances the audience from the narrative world. More importantly, the rubric signals that the text has a didactic purpose.

5.1.2.1. Beds of Eternity, or Beds of Youth?

A crux for the interpretation of Combination II is the difficult expression מִשְּכָּבָּלך (II.11). In the Hebrew Bible מִשְּכָּב occurs x46.335 In the majority of instances (85%) it simply denotes a place to lie down.336 Only twice is מִשְּכָּב used in a context of death to denote a funerary bier: בְּדוֹר הַלֵּוֶיָּהוֹן מִשְכָּב הַשָּׁלָל הַכָּל יָמָיו הַבָּנֶיה וּלְפָנָיו קָרָם "they have given him (Elam) a bed in the midst of the slain with all its multitude, their graves surround it" (Ezek 32:25); וְיָשַׁכְּבָהוּ בְּמִשְׁכָּבָּן וְשַׁמְס בָּנוֹת מַאֲסָר בְּמַעֲשֶׂים מַסְפָּרָה "they laid him in the bed filled with perfume and various spices prepared by the spice mixer’s art” (2 Chron 16:14).337 To this might be added הביה

336 That is, 39 of 46 times, Cf. Gen 49:4 (although see below);Exod 7:28 (Eng. 8:3); 21:18; Lev 15:4, 5, 21, 23, 24, 26x2; 2 Sam 4:5, 7, 11; 11:2, 13; 13:5; 17:28; 1 Kgs 1:47; 2 Kgs 6:12; 2 Chron 16:14; Job 7:13; 33:15, 19; Ps 4:5; 36:5; 41:4 (Eng. 41:3); 149:5; Prov 7:17; 22:27; Song 3:1; Qoh 10:20; Isa 57:2, 7; 8x2; Ezek 23:17; 32:25; Hos 7:14; Mic 2:1.
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As a nomen regens in a construct relationship, מְשָׁכַב occurs x11 (all of them in the Hebrew Bible); x9 in the singular: Lev 15:26; Num 31:17, 18, 35; Judges 21:11, 12; 2 Sam 4:5; Ezek 23:17; and x3 in the plural: Gen 49:4; Lev 18:22; 20:13. Significantly, all but one of these (2 Sam 4:5, מְשָׁכַב הַנַּחַרּ, “the noontime bed”) have sexual connotations. Furthermore, in seven instances (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Num 31:17, 18, 35; Judg 21:11, 12; cf. Isa 57:8 and Ezek 23:17) מְשָׁכַב is used metonymically as a reference to a sexual act. I will discuss each in turn.

In Num 31:17, reference is made to כל אשה ידעת איש למשכב זכר, “every woman who has known a man with respect to the bed of a male”. In the parallel expression in Num 31:18, מְשָׁכַב זכר functions as the object of the verb: כל הנשים אשר לא ידעו משכב זכר “all the women who had not known the bed of a man”; cf. Num 31:35, מְשָׁכַב זכר, “from the women who had not known the bed of a man”. Similarly, Judg 21:11 refers to כל זכר כל אשה ידעת משכב זכר, “every man and every woman who has known the bed of a man”, and in Judg 21:12, נערה בותלה אשר לא ידעה איש למשכב זכר, “a young virgin who had not known a man with regard to the bed of a male”. As Saul Olyan has noted, in these contexts מְשָׁכַב זכר (lit. “the bed of a male”) must refer to a sexual act, because it is the criterion which defines a virgin over against a non-virgin.

339 Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 233; for a full listing see, Hoftijzer and Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions, vol.2, 701. Admittedly, a mortuary association seems to predominate in the epigraphic sources cited by Hoftijzer and Jongeling; however, allowance must be made for the context in which these epigraphs were found.
340 Cf. GKC §114o, 119u; Joüon §130g; Williams, §273a.
341 Saul M. Olyan, “‘And with a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying down of a Woman’: On the Meaning and Significance of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13”, Journal of the History of
An analogous expression occurs in Lev 18:22 and 20:13, where, once again, משכב almost certainly has sexual connotations; but there the syntax is more difficult.\textsuperscript{342} Lev 18:22 contains the prohibition: נא משכב משכב אשה והם הוא, lit. “and with a male you shall not lie the beds of a woman it is an abomination”, while Lev 20:13 has the pronouncement, ואיש איש איש ישב משכב אשה והם איש הם יש乡村旅游, lit. “and a man who lies with a male the beds of a woman they have both committed an abomination”. These verses are usually translated as though they contained the prepositional phrase כמשכב אשה, i.e. “as with a woman”, but as Olyan has noted, this is an interpretation, it is not literal.\textsuperscript{343} How, then, is משכב אשה to be translated?

This question is all the more important, because the syntax of these verses is virtually identical to that of the DAPT, albeit with negative prescriptive force. In other words, in both Lev 18:22; 22:13, and the DAPT II.11, the verb שכב in the imperfect is followed by the masculine plural construct משכב without a preposition.

In two other instances משכב occurs without a preposition even though one is expected (Gen 49:4; 2 Sam 4:5), but in both instances the sense can be inferred from the preceding transitive verb.\textsuperscript{344} But this is not the case with Lev 18:22 and 20:13. In these verses, the expression משכב אשה is best understood as having an epexegetical function; i.e. “and with a male you shall not lie, (that is) as the lyings down of a woman, it is an abomination” (Lev 18:22); and “a man who lies with a male, (that is) as the lyings down of a woman, they have both committed an abomination” (Lev 20:13). In this, the expression is semantically equivalent to לא יידעו איש למשכב אחר איש למשכב in Num 31:17 and Judg 21:12, in which the parenthesis is

\textsuperscript{342} Caquot and Lemaire, “Les Textes Araméens de Deir ʿAlla”, 205, noted the similarity between these verses and Deir ʿAlla II.11.

\textsuperscript{343} Olyan, “‘And with a Male You Shall Not Lie”, 179.

\textsuperscript{344} Cf. the discussion of this principle in Jolton §133i.
marked by the specificatory preposition ל. Accordingly, the parenthetical expression משכבי֯אשה (Lev 18:22; 20:13) can be understood as clarifying the nature of the lying; that is, in the manner of a woman.\footnote{It is possible that this basic explanation might also be extended to 2 Sam 4:5, which narrates the murder of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, at the hands of Baanah and Rachab, the sons of Rimmon the Bejaminite. In 2 Sam 4:5 it is reported that Baanah and Rachab came to Ish-bosheth as he was taking his noonday rest, Heb. והוא שכב את משכבי֯אשה, “and he lay upon his noonday-bed” (cf. Lev 15:23; 2 Sam 4:11; etc.). However, this is not what we find; rather, the accusative particle את is introduced by the accusative particle את, lit. “and he lay, the bed (or, lying) of noonday.” The syntagm על את֯משכב is not together with המשכבים anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible, and as such, it might be preferable to translate את משכבי֯אשה as a parenthetical explicatory clause, clarifying the nature of the active participle שכב, i.e. “he lay, (that is) the lying of noonday.”}

But why in Lev 18:22 and 20:13 is משכבי֯אשה written as a plural construct, while in Num 31:17 and Judg 21:12 (cf. Num 31:18, 35; Judg 21:11) it is singular?

To address this question it is instructive to look more closely at the overall pattern of usage of the noun משכבי֯אשה in the Hebrew Bible. In the majority of cases, whether in the absolute or construct state, משכבי֯אשה is singular. Three times (Gen 49:4; Lev 18:22; 20:13)—all in sexual contexts—משכבי֯אשה occurs as a masculine plural in the construct state; the same form as in the DAPT. However, in four instances (Isa 57:2; Hos 7:14; Mic 2:1; Ps 149:5) משכבי֯אשה occurs as a plural, agreeing with a plural subject, and in each of these cases the plural form is feminine (משכבית).\footnote{In each case משכבי֯אשה occurs in the syntagm על את֯משכב, with the sense of the subjects either resting or scheming upon their beds.}

Notwithstanding these morphologically feminine forms, lexicographers have tended to identify משכבי֯אשה as an irregular masculine noun—presumably on the basis of the morphologically masculine plural construct;\footnote{Cf. Gesenius, “משכבי֯אשה”, in \textit{Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon}. 517; משכבי֯אשה, \textit{BDB}: 1012.} however, the evidence of the feminine suffixed form cannot be easily discounted. Moreover, it should be noted that in Lev 18:22 the pronoun referring to the masculine plural משכבי֯אשה, is the 3.f.s. demonstrative הִוא.
In fact, with the exception of the three plural examples just cited, none of the occurrences of מְשַכְּבָּה in the Hebrew Bible are demonstrably masculine. The same is true of the epigraphical data collated by Hoftijzer and Jongeling, with the sole exception of the masculine plural construct מְשַכְּבִּים in Deir `Alla II.11.\(^{348}\) In addition, it should be noted that two other nouns derived from מְשַכָּב (שְּכָּבָּה and שְּכֹבֶת, שָׁכָּבָּה) are apparently both feminine, despite the fact that they are primarily associated with male sexuality.\(^{349}\) Consequently, there is substantial evidence to suggest that מְשַכְּב should generally be identified as a feminine noun. This makes the few masculine plural construct forms all the more significant.

As noted above, whenever the noun מְשַכְּב is demonstrably masculine, it always denotes a sexual act (Gen 49:4; Lev 18:22; 20:13). But when מְשַכְּב is demonstrably feminine, it generally denotes a place to lie down. As such, there seems to be a functional distinction between the feminine noun מְשַכָּב(ת), “couch, bed”, and the masculine noun מְשַכָּב(ים), “copulation”.\(^{350}\) It goes beyond the evidence to assume that every instance in which the singular מְשַכְּב has a sexual acceptation it was masculine, but it is a possibility. At a semantic level, it might be speculated that the ambiguous masculine plural construct was intended to have an expansive, inclusive connotation. As such, מְשַכָּב would evoke not so much a specific sexual encounter, but, in a more general sense, all sexual experiences associated with the head noun.

The intentionality with which מְשַכָּבות/מְשַכָּב(ים) are employed in BH can perhaps be demonstrated from the one other instance in which the

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\(^{348}\) Hoftijzer and Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions, vol.2, 701.

\(^{349}\) שְּכֹבֶת, “layer”, only ever occurs in the construct state, and seven out of nine times appears in the construct chain שְׁכָּבְתָּה, “layer of seed” (viz. semen; cf. Lev 15:16, 17, 18, 32; 19:20; 22:4; Num 5:13). The only exception is Exod 16:13, 14, where it refers to a layer of dew. שְׁכָּבָּה, likewise occurs only in the construct, often with the masculine possessive suffix, governed by the verb נָתַן, and seems to have the sense “copulation” (cf. Lev 18:20, 23; 20:15; Num 5:20).

\(^{350}\) Of course, the verb šākab is frequently used as a euphemism for sexual intercourse; cf. Gen 19:32, 33, 34, 35; 30:15, 16; 34:2; 35:22; 38:26; 39:7, 12, 14; Deut 22:14, 22, 25, 29; Lev.18:22; 20:13; 28:30; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 11:4, 11; 12:11, 24; 13:11, 14.
masculine plural construct appears. Genesis 49:4 refers to the מְשֶכֶבֶךְ אָבִיךְ, “the beds (viz. copulations) of your father”. The reference is unambiguously sexual, as the allusion is to Reuben’s adulterous dalliance with his father’s concubine Bilhah (Gen 35:22).

In the MT the verse reads: פָּפּוֹת מַחֲמֵם אֵל־תֹּתְרָה לֵיכָנְתַּךְ מְשֶכֶבֶךְ אָבִיךְ אֶזֶזְלַחְלֵל יִצְעְיִי עָלָה, lit. “unstable as water,” may you (Reuben) not excel, for you went up (to) the beds (viz. copulations) of your father; then you defiled (it)—he went up to my bed!”

The significance of the expression מְשֶכֶבֶךְ אָבִיךְ can best be appreciated by considering how the parallel noun יִצְעְיִי was treated in the ancient translations. The Pesher in 4Q252 iv.4–5 preserves a variant reading, in which the 3.m.s. suffix (יִצְעְיוּ) replaces the 1.c.s. (יִצְעְיִי); מְשֶכֶבֶךְ אָבִיךְ אֶזֶזְלַחְלֵל יִצְעְיוּ עָלָה, “you went up (to) the beds (viz. copulations) of your father, then you defiled his couches, he went up”.

The effect of this change, is that the singular noun יִצְעְיִי (MT) is transformed into a plural noun יִצְעְיוּ (4Q252). As such, the plural יִצְעְיוּ precisely parallels the plural מְשֶכֶבֶךְ. This variant is supported by the Vulgate: quia ascendisti cubile patris tui et maculasti stratum eius, “you went up to your father’s bed, and you defiled his couch”. It might also be

351 This incident is described in only one verse, which is immediately followed by a list of the sons of Jacob. The purpose of this juxtaposition is unclear, but one wonders whether it might be mnemonic; preparing the audience for the intertextual reference in Jacob’s final blessing at the end of the book.

352 Note the double entendre of the verb פָּפּוֹת (see above). Another possible interpretation of the expression פָּפּוֹת מַחֲמֵם אֵל־תֹּתְרָה is “may your loins be like water, may you never succeed”. In other words, the first part of this verse might be interpreted as an imprecation in which Reuben is cursed with impotency as a consequence of his adultery. Indeed, this interpretation is probably to be preferred on the basis of the juxtaposition with Gen 49:3, which stresses Reuben’s virility and primogeniture.

353 Note that the weak disjuctive accent תִּפְחָה lies beneath חָלָלְתָּה, suggesting that should be read together with עָלָה.

354 Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition, vol.1, 1Q1–4Q273 (Leiden, Brill, 1999), 505, smoothe this in translation: “you mounted your father’s bed; then you defiled it, he had lain in it,” cf. yāṣṣi’ā‘, “to spread out, lie” (Isa 58:5); however, note that this assumes that miskh is feminine.
supported by the LXX: ἀνέβης ἐπὶ τὴν κοίτην τοῦ πατρὸς σου τότε ἐμίανας τὴν στρωμνὴν οὖ ἀνέβης, “you went up upon your father’s bed, then you defiled the couch where you had gone up”. As such, it might be possible to explain the abrupt change to the first person (זָרָה) in the MT as a corruption from זָרָה. 355 However, the MT’s variant is supported by Sam. Pent. (תַּזְרָה), Syr. (תַּזְרָה), Tg. Onq. (תַּזְרָה) Tg. Ps.-J. (תַּזְרָה) Tg. Neof. (תַּזְרָה), and indirectly by the Samaritan Targum (תַּזְרָה). In light of this evidence, it might be possible to view the variant 3.m.s. suffix in 4Q252, Vulg. and LXX as an interpretive plus, intended to smooth out the abrupt change in grammatical person. The significance of this is that, in the tradition reflected by the MT, משכב and יצוע are not strictly parallel; a disparity that certain sources sought to ameliorate.

The authenticity of the MT’s reading might be further supported by internal evidence, since the emendation of the 1.c.s. pronominal suffix creates the problem of explaining the third person verb ûה, which is left hanging in 4Q252 (note the insertion of the relative adverb û in the LXX in order to alleviate this tension). One option is to follow the LXX and emend ûה to the second person (ûה, “you went up”), but this does little to clarify the meaning of the verb in the context. Another option is perhaps to interpret ûה as a pleonastic resumptive pronoun with the preposition על (i.e. על(י)הוֹ; i.e. “you went up (to) the beds (viz. copulations) of your father, then you defiled his couches, upon it (viz. the couches)” 356 A far simpler option, however, is to follow the unamended MT and interpret ûה as an ad hoc exclamation: “he went up to my couch!”

But it may not be necessary to go so far as to posit an Urtext which originally read יצוע; perhaps it is enough to simply note that some witnesses attest a variant with both plural משכבים and singular יצוע. It should also be noted that the use of plural משכרים appears to have been deliberate,

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355 This is a simple enough change, which requires only the accidental omission of the וַחֲנָה.
356 However, note that ûה is singular, while the emended יצוע is now plural, which again indirectly supports the MT’s reading.
since, as illustrated above, מְשֵׁכָּי with sexual connotations need not be plural (e.g. Num 31:17, 18, 35; Judg 21:11, 12). Consequently, we are warranted to seek an explanation, and, as such, it may be inferred that the use of the masculine plural construct מְשֵׁכָּי in Gen 49:4 was deliberately calculated to emphasise the sexual nature of the transgression.  

In short, in light of the overwhelming biblical evidence, and especially given the close parallel in the syntax of Lev 18:22 and 20:13, it seems unavoidable that מְשֵׁכָּי in Deir ʿAlla II.11 should be interpreted as a sexual, rather than a mortuary allusion.

5.1.2.2. COMBINATION II: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

As noted above, the interpretation of Combination II is hampered by the uncertainty regarding the relationship between the two combinations and by the fact that no single line is preserved to the end. Broadly speaking, interpretations of the Combination II can be divided into two groups: those who see death as the dominant theme, and those who see references to youth and sexuality.

The foremost proponents of the first view are Baruch Levine and Jo Ann Hackett. According to Levine, Combination II “presents a dramatic description of the netherworld”, which is characterised by a complete separation from the experiences of the living. In Levine’s view both Combination I and Combination II are separate prophecies of the seer Balaam that were collected under a single rubric ספר בֵּלעָם בְּמֵא שָׁהוֹ (I.1). Levine understood these oracles to be part of an ancient “El repertoire”, noting that the “reference to the deity El, links the two ‘Combinations’ of the Balaam text to one another more firmly than was

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357 Consequently, in this context it should also be noted that the LXX typically uses κοίτη for מְשֵׁכָּי (cf. Lev 18:22; 20:13; Num 31:17, 18, 35; Judg 21:11, 12), which has corresponding sexual connotations (cf. LSJ, κοίτη IV).

358 Levine, Numbers 21–36, 255.

previously possible”. Central to Levine’s translation is the interpretation רֶןֶךְ, “corpse” (based primarily on his association with Isa 14:19), and the reference to רֶמֶשׁ מִן גֶּדֶשׁ, “wormrot from the grave”.

Hackett was likewise persuaded to see a mortuary context, especially with regard to the expression רֶמֶשׁ מִן גֶּדֶשׁ, “the worm from the tomb”. However, she disagreed with Levine over the interpretation of רֶןֶךְ, which she read as “scion” rather than “corpse”. More importantly, Hackett understood מלך (II.9, 15) as an allusion to child sacrifice, which she suggested was an overarching theme of Combination II. As Hackett realised, the principal appeal of this view is that it is then possible to establish a direct relationship between both combinations, inasmuch as the child sacrifices of Combination II might be understood in the context of an expiatory ritual in response to the prophecy of Combination I.

The second view, that Combination II was concerned with matters of sexuality and youthful vitality, has been championed by Caquot and Lemaire, and by Alexander Rofé. Caquot and Lemaire did not offer an overall interpretation of Combination II, but their interpretation of עלם as “youth”, רֶמֶשׁ מִן גֶּדֶשׁ, as “rising up from affliction”, and משכביעלמיך in terms of youthful vitality, shifted focus away from a mortuary context.

Rofé went further, interpreting the two combinations of the DAPT as belonging to a heiros logos that culminates in a description of a ritual for the prevention of the calamities described in Combination I. For Rofé the clue to interpreting Combination II lay in what he took to be a number

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360 Levine, “The Balaam Inscription form Deir ’Alla: Historical Aspects”, 333. Levine subsequently re-endorsed this view; although, he commented that “I now seriously doubt that Combination II is topically sequential to Combination I”; Levine, “The Plaster Inscriptions from Deir ’Alla”, 71, 72.

361 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allā, 80–83; idem, “Religious Traditions in Israelite Transjordan”, 126. As Hackett observed, the more or less synonymous nouns זְכֵזָה and רֶמֶשׁ are used in Neo-Punic texts in the context of child sacrifice (cf. KAI 162:2; 163:3); cf. Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allā, 80, n.87.

362 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ’Allā, 80.

of sexual allusions: e.g. "עֲלַמָּה וּרְוֵי דָּדְנָה", "young woman, be sated with love" (II.4); and "מַנְּקָחֵי מְנַשֶּׁשׁ מַעְרַב שֶׁכיֶּר", "from the testicles of men and from thighs" (II.8). This led him to interpret "בֵית לִיעֵל הַלֵּךְ וַיִּלְעֶל הַלָּךְ וְאַחַר וְאַחַר שֶׁמַּאָלְטָב הָעָשׂוֹת וְלָבַּז הָעָשׂוֹת" (II.7), as a reference to sacrificial prostitution intended to increase fertility and avert drought and desolation.\(^{364}\)

Intriguingly, despite their different emphases, the suggestions of both Hackett and Rofé that Combination II describes some sort of ritual act might be extended to the physical context of the DAPT. Were the benches used for the preparation of the deceased for burial, or beds used for sacrificial prostitution? Can they be linked to the "משכֶּבֶת תָּלָמוֹן" in II.11? Unfortunately, we cannot be certain in either case.

Yet another view was propounded by Blum, who again argued that Combination II was a sapiential text containing a dialogue between two or more interlocutors on the transience of life.\(^{365}\) Hence he saw Combination II as a third composition, conflated with the two texts he reconstructed in Combination I (see further below). Blum’s arguments are cogent and he may well be correct to classify Combination II as sapiential, but, for my part, I am inclined to see Combinations I and II as belonging to an original and coherent whole, united by the themes of death and rejuvenation that follow from the divine pronouncement in I.6–7.

Blum was certainly right to caution against imposing an artificial harmony where there are such substantial lacunae.\(^{366}\) But the overarching unity of the two combinations is suggested by the references to death, which correspond to the restriction of fertility (I.14), and renewed vitality, which underscores the cyclical nature of life: e.g. "יָעָר אַל בֵּית עָלָמוֹת..." "pass over to the grave" (II.6); "רֱמֶה מִן מְרֶשׁ..." "wormrot from the grave" (II.8);

\(^{364}\) Note that the concept of sacrificial prostitution in the ancient Near East generally is now much disputed; see, for example, Edward Lipiński, “Cult Prostitution in Ancient Israel?”, BAR 40/1 (2014): 48–56, 70.

\(^{365}\) Blum, “‘Verstehste du dich nicht auf die Schreibkunst...?’”, 33–53.

\(^{366}\) Ibid, 40.
(possibly) ל[2]ש, “the bereaved” (II.16); נקר֯ומד ֯ ר֯כל֯רט ֯ ב, “the sprout and the soil containing succulents” (II.5); “death will (no longer?) take the newborn infant and the suckling of …” (II.13). It is against this imagery of restricted and renewed fertility that the sexual allusions should read: e.g. מְשַׁכְּבֵיַּלָּךְ, “sated with love” (II.4); מַכָּה חַמִּיתֵךְ, “the bed of your youth” (II.11). These allusions to fecundity are logically consistent with the plague announced in I.6–7. Furthermore, if the designation ספר in the rubrics in I.1 and II.17—which frame combinations I and II—is correctly understood as a reference to the dream report, then the qualification מַשְׁפַּט וּמַלְכֵּךְ, “a judgement and a chastisement” in II.17 can readily be understood as a reference to the calamities described in Combination I.

Granted the unity of the two combinations, Combination II seems to describe the resolution to Combination I—perhaps including some sort of ritual including sacrifices as suggested by Hackett—followed by an exhortation to preserve the account orally. The text is too fragmentary to know whether Combination II included a description of how the plague was resolved, or whether it prescribed a ritual to avert the disaster. In either case, the exhortation in II.17 might suggest that the account was preserved and transmitted for didactic purposes. This may support the view that the DAPT were related to education, but it is important to draw a distinction here between the Sitz im Leben of the Balaam tradition and the purpose of the text. Consequently we will reserve judgement until the discussion of the physical context of the DAPT in Chapter 7.

5.2. ADDITIONAL INSCRIPTIONS FOUND AT DEIR ʿALLA

In addition to the DAPT a number of noteworthy inscriptions were unearthed from different strata at Deir ʿAlla. These can be used to build a

367 Incidentally, this significantly lessens the force of Blum’s contention that there is no resolution to the calamites in Combination I (see above).

368 Note that didacticism doesn’t necessarily imply a pedagogical context. Proverbs and other didactic texts have a long established history in oral lore (e.g. Aesop’s fables).
picture of the shifting cultural affiliations of the site, and the range of writing activity that took place there.

5.2.1. Inscribed Clay Tablets

At the end of the 1964 season the excavators discovered two rooms associated with the Late Bronze Age sanctuary (see §7.3.3). The rooms were apparently destroyed in the earthquake that demolished the sanctuary. A *terminus post quem* ca.1200 B.C.E. was determined for this destruction on the basis of a faience vase bearing the cartouche of the 19th dynasty Egyptian queen Taousert, which was discovered on the sanctuary floor.369 This was corroborated by the ceramic evidence.370 Among the finds in these rooms were three small clay tablets, one of them broken. They had been inscribed, while the clay was still wet, with a hitherto undeciphered linear script. Together with these inscribed tablets were seven more tablets decorated with incised dots in various configurations.371 An additional

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371 Four of the tablets published by Franken appear to be arranged with 7 dots forming an L shape: 6 dots on one line, and 1 dot on the line beneath. One other tablet appears to follow the same pattern but with 5 dots on the upper line and 2 dots on the lower. A sixth tablet appears to have 7 dots, but with 4 on the upper line and 3 on the lower; for drawings of these tablets, see Franken, “The Stratigraphic Context of the Clay Tablets Found at Deir ‘Alla”, 73; idem, *Excavations at Tell Deir ‘Alla. The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary* (Louvain: Peeters, 1992); Zeidan A. Kafafi, “The Archaeological Context of
tablet appears to have been prepared for inscription/decoration, but was crushed while the clay was wet—perhaps by the scribe—and discarded prior to incision. As Franken noted, the presence of this crushed tablet indicates that the texts were probably produced locally.\textsuperscript{372}

Franken originally speculated that the function of the tablets may have been related to the Bronze Age sanctuary; however, the subsequent discovery of additional tablets in domestic contexts on the southern side of the tell challenges this assumption.\textsuperscript{373} The function of these tablets with their enigmatic script and markings remains unclear.

A number of studies have been devoted to the decipherment of the script, but none has been entirely convincing. Comparisons have been drawn with the Cypriot and Minoan linear syllabaries,\textsuperscript{374} early Arabic,\textsuperscript{375} Phoenician,\textsuperscript{376} and Etruscan scripts,\textsuperscript{377} and Luwian hieroglyphs.\textsuperscript{378}

\textsuperscript{372} Franken, “Clay Tablets from Deir ʿAlla Jordan”, 378.


One of the most ambitious attempts to translate and interpret the tablets was undertaken by William Shea.\textsuperscript{379} Shea’s arguments are particularly important owing to his claim to have identified the GN Pethor in one of the inscriptions (DA1449 = Shea text I).\textsuperscript{380} Basing his conclusions on a combination of internal (i.e. plausibility of readings) and external considerations (i.e. comparison with known letter forms in other scripts), Shea described the writing system as an “Early Canaanite” script related to “other early West-Semitic alphabets”.\textsuperscript{381} Now it is true that Shea’s reconstructions achieve a certain internal consistency, which is at first glance attractive, but, quite apart from his prior assumption that the language (as distinct from script) of the tablets belongs to the Semitic family,\textsuperscript{382} his arguments rest on a number of problematic assumptions, generalisations, and orthographic anomalies that ultimately render his conclusions extremely unlikely. I include just a few of the most significant objections here.

One of the strongest objections to Shea’s readings is his need to postulate the extensive use of internal \textit{m.l.}; e.g. \textit{wāw} representing \textit{lāl} (\textit{wywbbq}, “and the Jabbok (river)” (DA1441));\textsuperscript{383} \textit{yād} representing \textit{lāl} (as a


\textsuperscript{380} Subsequent to Shea’s attempted decipherment an additional fragment was found on which the combination of signs he identified as the GN Pethor occurs twice in two lines; cf. Kafafi, “The Archaeological Context of the Tell Deir ʿAllā Tablets”, 126, fig. 17.


\textsuperscript{382} Cf. Shea. “The Inscribed Tablets from Tell Deir ʿAlla Part I”, 27: “The vertical box-shaped sign at the beginning of the one word on the side of text III has been difficult to identify. It looks most like \textit{heth}, but it does not function like \textit{heth} because it is followed by a clear example of an ‘ayin. The combination of \textit{heth} followed by ‘ayin does not occur in West-Semitic languages.”

\textsuperscript{383} Shea, “The Inscribed Tablets from Tell Deir ʿAlla Part II”, 99.
plural ending in the nouns *btym*, “houses,” DA1440; and *ʿʿym*, “ruins,” DA1440, cf. BH יָשֶׁם, “heap of ruins”; and as a medial vowel: *wysym, queryString* "̲šîm*, “to set, place” DA1400). Although internal *m.l.* are attested in Old Aramaic inscriptions as early as the 9th century, it would indeed be surprising to see such fully-fledged use of internal vowel letters in texts dated archaeologically to the late 13th century. Shea recognised that in this regard his proposed readings were extraordinary, but he ignored the difficulty. This disregard of the problem amounts to special pleading.

In addition, according to Shea’s reconstruction, the orthography of the clay inscriptions differs significantly from that of the DAPT. Thus, in the first line of tablet 1440 Shea reads *btym*, “houses”, with contracted diphthong, while in the DAPT II.6, 7 we find the *plene* spelling בית, suggesting the uncontracted diphthong (cf. §6.3.2). Similarly, in the same tablet Shea finds two counts of the masculine plural -ʿʿym (with mimiation), while in the DAPT the masculine plural absolute is written י- (with nunation; cf. §6.1.1). Admittedly, this objection is of a lower order, as (a) there is evidence of a cultural break between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age II settlements (cf. §7.3.4); and (b) it cannot be proved that the dialect represented by the DAPT is representative of the local dialect spoken at Deir ʿAlla. Nevertheless, the variation should be noted, especially because Shea assumes that there was a fundamental continuity (related to the Balaam tradition) on the basis of the GN Pethor.

In addition to these orthographic concerns, objections could be raised in regard to Shea’s palaeographic comparisons. For instance, Shea’s identification of *lāmed* and *mēm* with cognate forms in the roughly

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385 On the use of internal *m.l.* in OA, note especially *yšym* in the Tell Fekherye inscription (KAI 309, line 12); cf. Shea, “The Inscribed Tablets from Tell Deir ʿAlla Part II”, 106.
contemporary ‘Izbet Ṣarṭah ostracon are not as secure as he suggests. In particular, the identification of mēm in the ‘Izbet Ṣarṭah ostracon is debated, and most scholars read nūn for the grapheme Shea identifies as mēm. Yet Shea did not attempt to supply any graphic parallels for his interpretation of the ‘Izbet Ṣarṭah mēm, and his argument rests solely on internal criteria.

Finally, Shea’s identification of the GN “Pethor” in tablet DA1449 is questionable. It is far from certain that the biblical noun פְּתֹורָּה (Num 22:5; Deut 23:5) is a toponym (cf. §D.2), and Shea’s attempt to identify Tell Deir ‘Alla as “Pethor” seems to betray a methodologically unsound desire to identify the site directly with the biblical prophet Balaam, despite the occupational gap noted above.

In a more modest assessment, it may simply be observed that the repetition of such a small inventory of signs suggests an alphabetic script. Vertical lines incised into the surface of the clay appear to be word dividers, separating the signs in clusters of 3–5 graphemes, which might indicate a triconsonental system (supporting Shea’s assumption of a Semitic base). And, according to Franken a number of factors, including the angle at which the signs were incised, suggest that the tablets should be read from right to left.

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389 Indeed, one wonders whether this identification would have been possible if it were not for the DAPT. Irrespective, a questionable interpretation in a debated text (DA1449) can hardly be viewed as confirmation of the difficult Masoretic reading.

5.2.2. **The Measure “of the Gate”**

From the same stratum as the DAPT, the excavators also unearthed two interrelated inscriptions incised into a small round stone and a small jug respectively. The inscription on the stone, written *scripta continua*, reads אבנשרעא, “stone of šrʿʾ”. While the inscription on the jug, also written *scripta continua*, reads זישרעא, “of šrʿʾ”, where ז is the genitive demonstrative pronoun.

The surface of the stone above the inscription has a shiny appearance, which Franken interpreted as the result of frequent kissing or touching. This led him to the view that the stone was an object of veneration. Owing to the possibly religious nature of this object, Hoftijzer then posited the possibility that šrʿʾ might be a DN; although he acknowledged that the DN šrʿʾ is not attested in any other context.

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**Fig.5.5—The inscribed stone**

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392 Ibid, 15.
393 Ibid, 274–75. Hoftijzer doubted that šrʿʾ was to be identified with the DN in 1.6, due to the fact that the stem of the rēš would likely then be visible on the plaster below the break.
A more elegant solution was proposed in 1993 by Israel Ephʿal and Joseph Naveh. Noting the difficulties in interpreting šrʾ as a DN, Ephʿal and Naveh instead read, “of the gate” (cf. Aram trʿ; Heb. šʿr), and identified the stone and the vessel with a system of official weights and measures. To support this interpretation they adduced numerous

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comparable examples, the most notable being a jar from Tel Kinrot bearing the Hebrew inscription כד֯ה שער, “the jar of the gate”. Notwithstanding the spelling šrʾ’, rather than the expected trʾ’, the use of the postpositive article -āʾ strongly hints at Aramaic affiliation. As noted by Naʾaman, this might suggest that at some stage Deir ʿAlla was incorporated into the Aramean imperial system (see further §7.4).

5.2.3. AN ABECEDARY

Another text, incised before firing below the exterior rim of a clay bowl, has been interpreted as a partial abecedary. From right to left this inscription reads אבגדזח. Hoftijzer suggested that omission of the hê and wāw may be due to the fact that those letters also function as matres lectionis, and so were treated as special by the scribe. However, it should also be noted that only part of the hêt is preserved, and what is visible is questionable. We would expect the lateral bars of a hêt to slope downward to the left, rather than upward as they do in this instance. As such, to the best of my knowledge, this hêt would be unique. The dālet is also distorted, and is, in fact, similar in stance and proportion to the damaged ʿâlep in the first position (or, less likely, a rêš). Furthermore,

400 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 285.
both the left and right-hand edges of the inscription are damaged, meaning it is possible that the extant letters preserve only a fragment from a longer line. As such, while the identification of this inscription as an abecedary is probable, it is not assured.

5.2.4. AMMONITE INSCRIPTIONS

Several ostraca and seals found in strata above the DAPT testify to the incorporation of Deir ‘Alla into the Ammonite cultural sphere in the 7th and 6th centuries (see §7.3.5).

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

As at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, the overall picture of writing activity that emerges from Deir ‘Alla is variegated, including lengthy literary plaster texts alongside mundane administrative activities; e.g. the (probable) measures “of the gate”. However, unlike Kuntillet ‘Ajrud there is little evidence for ad hoc and occasional writing (e.g. lists and epistolary texts). This may simply be an accident of preservation, or it may reflect the localised and more or less self-contained nature of the site, meaning there was little or no occasion for writing.

When considered diachronically, the various inscriptions reflect the changing orientation and allegiance of the settlement. Thus, the discovery of Ammonite texts in the strata above the DAPT points to an increasing incorporation into the Ammonite cultural sphere during the 7th century (see the more detailed discussion in Chapters 6 and 7). Yet more significant are the Late Bronze Age tablets, which have been used to argue for a basic

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402 Even if Deir ‘Alla did feature relatively prominently in the regional economy, as has been suggested by some (see §7.3.5), it does not necessarily follow that this must have been accompanied by extensive written records.
continuity between the Late Bronze Age sanctuary at Deir ‘Alla and the Iron Age bench-room in which the DAPT were found. Ultimately, however, attempts to translate these texts have proved unconvincing, and their significance remains a mystery. As such, the tablets are currently of no value for determining the question of continuity.

Turning to the plaster texts, the DAPT can best be characterised as a coherent prophetic narrative, recording a doom oracle (Combination I) and its resolution (Combination II). If the interpretation offered for the rubric in II.17 is accepted, then it seems that the account was adapted from (and accompanied by) oral traditions. Be that as it may, the evidence seems to suggest that the DAPT were transcribed from a written Vorlage (cf. the visual error in I.1). Yet there is no way of knowing how old this Vorlage was: it might have been an old scroll brought to Deir ‘Alla from elsewhere, or it might have been a local draft, composed immediately prior to being written onto the wall. Whatever the case, the act of transcribing the DAPT onto the wall surface testifies to the ongoing importance, and indeed relevance, of the Balaam prophecy at Deir ‘Alla.

Returning to the possible allusion to oral transmission in II.17, there is no reason to suppose that the inscription was intended to replace the oral medium. Indeed, the fact that the exhortation to preserve the account orally was itself copied along with the narrative testifies to the continuity of the oral tradition. In other words, the reproduction of the exhortation presupposes a desire that the tradent(s) who produced the DAPT (and/or its Vorlage) would continue to transmit and perform the tradition by word

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403 See especially Shea, “The Inscribed Tablets from Tell Deir ‘Alla Part I”, 21–37; idem, “The Inscribed Tablets from Tell Deir ‘Alla Part II”, 97–119. On the question of continuity genearally, see more recently, Brian B. Schmidt, “Memorializing Conflict: Toward an Iron Age ‘Shadow” History of Israel’s Earliest Literature”, in Literacy, Orality and Literary Production in the Southern Levant: Contextualizing Sacred Writing in Early Israel (SBLAIL) (forthcoming); although, note that Schmidt does not adduce the tablets in this context.
of mouth; otherwise, it could simply be omitted from the transcription. As such, it is probably safe to view the written text as a visual and mnemonic aid, metonymically related to the immanent performance tradition (see further Chapter 7). Significantly, as with the theophany at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, this supports the view that, at least in certain contexts, written literature continued to be viewed and experienced as part of the living, immanent tradition (see §2.9). But it should also be stressed that while these reflections stem from the new restoration of II.17, they are not ultimately dependent on that restoration. There is no a priori reason to doubt that at some stage a form (or forms) of the account existed in the oral lore, and, if so, the principle of continuity may apply even if it is not expressed explicitly.

This raises the question whether the text was embellished or modified when it was set in writing. In particular, should the frame narrative (I.1–6) be associated with the oral tradition, or only the prophetic apophthegm (I.6ff.) which is reproduced in poetic diction (i.e. parallelismus membrorum)? To a large extent, the answer to this question depends on the interpretation of the noun ספר in the rubrics in I.1 and II.17. If ספר is understood to refer reflexively to the DAPT, then the fact that the rubrics encapsulate the frame narrative suggests that the framing was viewed as part of the whole intended for oral recitation (II.17). Minimally, this seems to imply that oral recitation of the frame narrative was felt to be viable, and, as such, there is no reason to isolate it as a literary embellishment.

Be that as it may, the DAPT are distinguished from oral performance by virtue of their fixity. Notwithstanding the probability of continued interaction between the oral and literate registers, in their material form the DAPT took on a physical existence of their own. Unlike, fleeting occasional performances, the inscription is permanent, standing as a perpetual monument to the tradition. Because of this material quality, the

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404 This suggests that the exhortation was itself well-established as an essential part of the received tradition.
DAPT can only be fully appreciated with reference to their physical context. As such, it would be premature at this stage to speculate as to the function of the DAPT or the manner in which they would have been experienced. Such considerations will be deferred until Chapter 7.
As was remarked in Chapter 3, the linguistic classification of a text can offer potentially significant insights into its authorship and cultural context. But linguistic analysis can raise as many questions as it answers. This is especially true of the DAPT, which seem to reflect a unique admixture of Aramaic and Canaanite isoglosses. Indeed, almost since the time of their first publication, the linguistic classification of the DAPT has been a matter of intense debate, and the dialect has been described variously as a kind of Aramaic, or, with varying degrees of specificity, as a regional variety of Canaanite.

Owing to the classificatory purpose of much of the earlier discussion, the question has typically been framed in reference to a family tree model, assuming a mutually-exclusive relationship between the Aramaic and Canaanite branches. However, from the outset, the appropriateness of this model to describe the linguistic profile of the DAPT has been questioned. More recent work on the classification of the Semitic languages has tended to emphasise a wave-like model of areal diffusion alongside the linear tree and branch model. This complementary


2 Subsequent discussions have been oriented more to a description, attempting, in turn, to analyse and interpret the implications of the DAPT for Northwest Semitic dialectology generally.

model explains shared features as a result of contact between speakers of different dialects or languages, rather than inheritances from a common linguistic ancestor. Hence, the model of areal diffusion allows greater sensitivity to the dynamic processes of linguistic change. Accordingly, the language of the DAPT is now widely understood to represent a regional dialect, reflecting its situation between Aramean and Canaanite geopolitical spheres (see further below).

As in Chapter 3, the following discussion lists the most important isoglosses together with a brief evaluation of their significance, paying particular attention to diachronic considerations (i.e. linguistic innovations and retentions). For expediency, it will be convenient to use the term Aramaic (and occasionally Canaanite) in an abstract sense, as though

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5 The following remarks by Stephen A. Kaufman reflect the perspective well: “[i]f a new language appears in Gilead in the 8th century or so, looks somewhat like Aramaic to its North, Ammonite and Moabite to its South, and Hebrew to its West (that is to say: it looks exactly like any rational person would expect it to look like) and is clearly neither ancestor nor immediate descendant of any other known NW Semitic language that we know, why not simply say it is Gileadite and be done with it?”. Stephen A. Kaufman, “The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects in the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof,” in Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Panel Sessions: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1988), 55–56. Broadly speaking, this view is reflected in much of the literature on the Dialect of the DAPT (cf. n.1 above), and only a few scholars have held to a more polarised view, cf. Lemaire, “Les inscriptions sur plâtre de Deir ʿAlla et leur signification historique et culturelle”, 46–49; Hackett, “The Dialect of the Plaster Text from Tell Deir ʿAlla”, 57–65. It should be noted, however, that Hackett’s argument was framed in response to the, then, dominant view that the language of the inscription was Aramaic, and she has since reiterated that the situation is by no means clear cut, cf. idem, “Religious Traditions in Israelite Transjordan”, 125.
referring to a monolithic entity, just as one might speak today of English or Arabic. However, it should be borne in mind that this is an artificial homogeneity, and is only useful as a designation at the broadest levels of linguistic classification.

Ultimately, it will be argued that the data currently available are not sufficient to support a precise dialectical classification, but that the overall profile is well suited to that of a local vernacular dialect.

6.1. MORPHOLOGY

6.1.1. Nunation of masculine plural Absolute

The form of the masculine plural absolute suffix in the DAPT is -ן (אלהן, I.1x2, I.5; I.8;/arבך, I.9; מלתן, I.10; קבצן, I.11; רחבמן, II.6; מלתן, II.13), with nunation, as in Aramaic (-ן/-ין), rather than mimation, as in Hebrew, Ammonite, Phoenician and Ugaritic (-ם/-ים). However, it has been observed that nunation is also attested in Moabite, the Phoenician dialect of Arslan Tash (alongside mimation! cf. בן אלם, rev.11; קדשן, rev.12; שמם, rev.13), Mishnaic Hebrew (an Aramaism?), and, in various contexts, in Biblical Hebrew.

6 In adjacent lines on the reverse of inscription I. The significance of the presence of both alloforms in the inscriptions from Arslan Tash is debated. To find both forms attested in a single inscription is certainly surprising and Gibson may be correct in his opinion that the linguistic profile of the inscriptions reflects an intentional mix of Phoen. and Aram. forms (Gibson, Phoenician Inscriptions, 79–80); however, Garr has countered that the mimated forms may reflect borrowed or inherited religious vocabulary and might not reflect local speech patterns (Garr, Dialect geography of Syria-Palestine, 89). In response to this, it should be noted that although there are good parallels for ב אלם (cf. DDD, 794–800), it is less clear why would reflect a borrowing, since the form אדמן is well attested for Aramaic (cf. also DAPT I.6). Moreover, the extended formula (which presumably must form the basis of the borrowing or inheritance proposed by Garr) (באלת שמם ואיר), “(by/with) oaths of the heavens and the earth,” is unparalleled outside of the inscriptions from Arslan Tash.

In the Northwest Semitic dialects, it is not always clear whether nunation or mimation of the masculine plural suffix should be treated as evidence for a common ancestor or linguistic contact; although it has been argued that originally the nunated form was a linguistic retention, and mimation a secondary innovation shared by Ugaritic, Hebrew and Phoenician. In any case, the evidence for nunation in Moab. and the dialect of Arslan Tash, both of which bear significant affinities to the Canaanite branch of the Northwest Semitic group, militates against viewing the nunated masculine plural absolute as a purely Aramaic isogloss.

Inscription”, 109; Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ’Alla Inscription”, 311. Note, in particular, that both Greenfield and Rendsburg interpreted the nunation of the plural ending in BH as a possible northern Israelite (or, according to Rendsburg’s terminology, “Isralean”) characteristic. However, this is a complicated issue. Rendsburg has identified 25 examples of the י- masculine plural ending in the Hebrew Bible (Rendsburg, “A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew”, 15–16). Of these, twenty are from texts that he identified as having either a (northern) Israelite origin, or else evincing significant Israeli features (Judg 5:10; Prov 31:3; Ezek 26:18; 1 Kgs 11:33; 15x in Job, a book with numerous Aramaisms, but which Rendsburg identifies as “style-switching” and which may also represent a dialect that is geographically proximate to that of Deir ’Alla; cf. Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ’Alla Inscription”, passim). The remaining 5 examples are from (so-called) Judahite Hebrew texts: three of these Rendsburg identified as Aramaisms (Ezek 4:9; Lam 1:4; and Dan 12:13), but for the remaining two (2 Kgs 11:13; Mic 3:12) he provided no explanation. But of the 25 (if the examples from Job are included) northern texts, only one (Judg 5:10) was identified by Rendsburg as true Israelite Hebrew (that is, having a securely northern provenance), the remainder he identified as examples of “style-switching.” In light of this, and given that the shift -im > -in is phonologically relatively minor and involves no semantic differentiation, it is possible that each of the biblical occurrences of י- reflect Aramaic influence.

6.1.2. The 3.m.s suffix 

The characteristic Aram. 3.m.s suffix 

is well known from OA and IA, where it is the usual form for plural nouns (ך-ך; cf. BA -ôḥî). However, the diagnostic value of this feature in the DAPT (ךלה, I.1, I.4) has been questioned. Both Jonas Greenfield and Joseph Naveh have suggested that the suffix might also be attested in Moabite (ךס, “his days”, and perhaps נב, “his sons”, Mesha inscription, line 8). But Dennis Pardee has objected, arguing that the spelling of the only uncontested suffixed plural, שכרה, “its gates” (Mesha, line 22) with a yôd m.l., indicates that the underlying vowel was i-class rather than a u-class. Consequently, it would be unwise to place too much significance on the 

9 In Jewish Palestinian Aramaic the form י- is also attested, presumably from *ך-ך via syncope of the intervocalic he. There is some disagreement regarding the vocalization of -ך in OA: whether *awh, *awhû, *awhî, or *ôhî (see below). Cross has argued for *awh, on the basis that final vowels in OA are consistently indicated with m.l., and diphthongs are always marked; Frank Moore Cross Jr., “Some Problems in Old Hebrew Orthography with Special Attention to the Third Person Masculine Singular Suffix on Plural Nouns [-aw]”, ErIsr 27 Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Volume (2003): 18–24; reproduced in Leaves from an Epigrapher’s Notebook: Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Palaeography and Epigraphy (eds. John Huehnergard and Jo Ann Hackett; HSS 51; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003) §55. However, Cook citing the improbability of the revival of proto-Aramaic final vowels after their temporary loss in OA, has argued for the retention of unmarked final unstressed long vowels in OA (Edward M. Cook, “The Orthography of Final Unstressed Long Vowels in Old and Imperial Aramaic,” Maarav 5–6 (1990): 53–67). The problem remains unresolved.


12 As contraction of the diphthong was the norm in Moab. (aw > ô; ay > ê), the presence of the internal m.l. in יסבש (sa’areha) indicates that the stress fell on the penultima; cf. Beyer, “The Languages of Transjordan”, 113–14, §2.1.
possible Moabite attestation(s); after all, as Pardee observed, “[t]he Aramaic peculiarity of the suffix is not the -h, it is the -w-!”\(^\text{13}\)

No matter what the situation in Moabite, the fact remains that the closest orthographic parallel for the Deir ʿAlla pronominal suffix can be found in Aramaic. As such, it seems reasonable to infer that the 3.m.s. suffix \(-\text{הו-}\) in the Deir ʿAlla dialect and Aramaic is likely to reflect linguistic contact or a common intermediate ancestor.\(^\text{14}\) But, even so, Huehnergard has cautioned against assuming too close an equivalence, stressing that we do not know how the suffix was pronounced at Deir ʿAlla, and the process that led to it may not have been the same as in Aramaic.\(^\text{15}\)

6.1.3. The 2.f.s. pronominal suffix \(-\text{כי-}\)

The 2.f.s. pronominal suffix \(-\text{כי-}\) (עבכי, I.6; possibly \(\text{סךרכי}\), I.7) has been interpreted as an Aramaic isogloss (cf. BH \(\text{ך-}\); Phoen. \(\text{ך}\), once \(\text{כי}\))\(^\text{16}\) assuming, that is, that \(\text{כ-}\) is to be understood as a pronominal suffix and not

\(^{13}\) Dennis Pardee, Review of Jo Ann Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā, JNES 50 (1991): 140, n.1. However, it should be noted that the same situation is apparently reflected in Samalian which also attests the suffix \(-\text{יה-}\); cf. Cross, “Some Problems in Old Hebrew Orthography”.

\(^{14}\) Cf. Huehnergard, “What is Aramaic?”, 281, who went on to stress that “the putative common ancestor should not yet be labelled ‘Proto-Aramaic’ but something else, perhaps ‘Proto-Aramoid’. ”

\(^{15}\) Huehnergard, “What is Aramaic?”, 281; cf. Pardee, “The Linguistic Classification of the Deir ʿAlla Text”, 103. The origins of this form remain uncertain. A popular explanation proposed by Garr, Dialect geography of Syria-Palestine, 107, is that the suffix developed along the following lines: \(*\text{-ay-}\text{הו-}\) > (via regressive assimilation) \(*\text{-aw-}\text{הו-}\) > (then through dissimilation of \(\text{u-}\) [awh]). Alternatively, Israel, “Réflexions méthodologiques sur le classement linguistique de DAPT”, 306, §1.1 has proposed that the vowel represented by \(\text{wāw}\) might be explained as a simple glide inserted as an aid to pronunciation (cf. BH \(\text{ח}>\text{חי}\)).

a conjunction, as proposed by Levine (see §5.1.1, line 6). However, it has
been demonstrated that the yôd of the suffix, is a proto-Semitic retention *-ki rather than a shared innovation, and, as such, is not necessarily indicative of Aramaic affiliation.17

6.1.4. The N-stem

There appear to be two instances of verbs in the N-stem, with a reflexive sense as in Hebrew (עברית, “gathered themselves,” I.6; כותב, “sighs,” II.12x2). The loss of the proto-Semitic N-stem is already a significant isogloss of in OA.18 Accordingly, the retention of the N-stem in the DAPT tells against an Aramaic affiliation. However, it is possible that it is simply an archaism of the Deir ʿAlla dialect.19

6.1.5. The infixed t-stem

The infixed t-stem has an ʾâlep-preformative (ברע, אשתי, I.5; ליתמלך, II.9), analogous to the Aram. ʾitpeʿal and ʾitpaʿal conjugations.20 McCarter has observed that this is somewhat surprising, owing to the fact that the

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17 For a discussion of proto-Semitic *-ki see Rebecca Hasselbach, “Final Vowels of Pronominal Suffixes and Independent Personal Pronouns in Semitic.” JSS 49 (2004): 1–20; cf. Lipiński, Semitic Languages, 308, esp. §36.19, and the comparative table on pages 306–07. Rendsburg adduced seven biblical examples to suggest that the 2.f.s. pronominal suffix -כ- was retained in the northern “Israelian” dialect of Hebrew (Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ʿAlla Inscription”, 315; idem, “A Comprehensive Guide to Israeli Hebrew”, 12). However, these are of uncertain value, as it is unclear whether the examples he cites reflect a retention of proto-Semitic *-ki, or Aramaic influence.

18 See Huehnergard, “Remarks on the Classification of the Northwest Semitic Languages”, 289, who argued that the morpholexical load that had to be carried by the -t-forms in OA suggests that the loss of the N-stem had already occurred in the period of a common ancestor; cf. idem, “What is Aramaic?”, 272; Lipiński, Semitic Languages, §41.16.


causative stem has a *hê* prefix (cf. הָכַּּ֣רְךָאַּתָּה, “it has chased,” I.15), since it is usual for the prefix on verbs with a *t*-infix to follow, analogically, the prefix of the C-stem; although, he noted that such mixtures are not unparalleled.21

6.1.6. The 3.f.s perfect ending on verbs

The 3.f.s perfect ending *ת (חרֵפת, I.7/8; נֶשְׁרָת, I.8; הָכַּּ֣רְךָאַּתָּה, I.15) is a proto-Semitic retention shared with Aramaic and Samalian (cf. Ug. -*t*), in contrast with Canaanite *-ā* (cf. Hebrew -*h*; Phoen -*Ø*).22 However, as Huehnergard and Rubin have argued, the uneven loss of final *ת* in the Central Semitic group indicates that it should be interpreted as a parallel development, rather than a common innovation ascribed to a shared ancestor.23

6.1.7. The G-infinitive with suffixed -t

The suffixed -*t* of the G-infinitive (לְדוּעָת, II.17) is also a retention from proto-Semitic. The *miqtal* infinitive, with preformative *mēm*, which became characteristic of later Aramaic, is only sparsely attested in OA and, as such, its absence in the DAPT cannot reasonably be used to argue against Aramaic affiliation.24

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21 McCarter, “The Dialect of the Deir ‘Ala Texts”, 89; cf. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā*, 119. Lipiński, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II*, 125, explained this according to the different functions of the prefixed consonant in the two stems. According to Lipiński, the *hê* of the causative stem is the preformative, while the *‘ālep* of the *‘p*/*l* simply introduces a prosthetic vowel.


6.1.8. Forms of Negation

Two negative particles are attested in the DAPT: the independent particle ʾaš (I.6; I.7; possibly II.6) and the proclitic ʾay (cf. I.3; II.7; II.9). As already noted, there remains some uncertainty as to whether ʾaš is used in the DAPT to qualify nouns (see §5.1.1, line 6), or whether it is limited to the negation of volitive verbs. It is interesting to note, however, that Amarna Canaanite (following Akkadian) similarly evinces two negative particles: *ul* and *lā*, without any apparent difference in function.25

The second form, the proclitic ʾay, follows the pattern of the negative particle in Aramaic over against Heb. ṣāḥ and Phoen. (and Byblian) ṣāḥ[8].26 This correspondence was stressed by Lemaire as evidence of Aramaic affiliation.27 But, as Felice Israel noted, the proclitic ʾay is also attested in Ugaritic, suggesting that it is a proto-Northwest Semitic retention.28 Furthermore, as Heuhnergard observed, the spelling of the negative particle may simply reflect the influence of Aramaic orthography, rather than linguistic affiliation.29

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26 For a survey of the negation of finite verbs in the first millennium NWS dialects see Garr, *Dialect geography of Syria-Palestine*, 174–75.


28 Israel, “Réflexions méthodologiques sur le classement linguistique de DAPT”, 306, §1.1.

6.1.9. The Definite Article

There are no uncontested instances of the definite article in the DAPT; but the article א- occurs on the noun שֵׁרֶץ, “the gate”, on the inscribed jar and stone (see §5.2.2). The enclitic א- is an innovation known only from Aramaic and may be considered a pure Aramaism; however, as there are no certain examples of the article in the plaster texts, this must be treated independently of the DAPT.

6.2. SYNTAX

6.2.1. The wāw-consecutive

The DAPT contains a number of probable examples of the wāw consecutive (ויאתו, א. I.1; ויאמרו, א. I.2; ויקם, א. I.3; ויעל, א. I.4; ויחז, frag. [e]). The identification of these as consecutive forms is suggested both on morphological grounds—by the shortened imperfect (e.g. ואתהו, א. I.1; ויחזה, frag. [e])—and on syntactic grounds. That is, in the case of ויאתו in I.1, the wāw is main clause initial, with no antecedent, and consequently cannot be interpreted as a copulative.31

The question of the existence of the wāw consecutive in Old Aramaic received renewed attention following the discovery of the Tel Dan inscription in 1993, and a considerable body of literature arose around this question in the following decade.32 While there continues to be debate, 30 However, the apocopation could also be analysed as a *yaqtul preterite with simple copulative wāw (see below); cf. Joüon §117; T. Muraoka and M. Rogland, “The waw Consecutive in Old Aramaic? A Rejoinder to Victor Sasson,” VT 48 (1998): 99–104.

31 If the narrative is understood to commence after the rubric (which functionally parallels the superscriptions of biblical prophetic texts), then its use is that described by Alviero Niccacci as narrative initial, and as such is analogous to use of the wāw consecutive in BH prose narrative; Cf. Alviero Niccacci, The Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose (JSOTSup 86; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), esp. 37–38, §17–18, and 47, §26.

32 For a summary of the debate with a thorough bibliography see Hallivard Hagelia, “Philological Issues in the Tel Dan Inscription,” in Current Issues in the Analysis of Semitic Grammar and Lexicon I: Oslo-Göteborg Cooperation 3rd-5th June 2004 (eds.
the syntax of the *yaqtul* preterite with (and without) *wāw* in the Zakkur and Tel Dan inscriptions (e.g. אַלָּל, Tel Dan line 6) is strongly reminiscent of the *wāw* consecutive as encountered in Biblical Hebrew. Consequently, the use of the *wāw* consecutive in the DAPT cannot, with any certainty, be used to argue against Aramaic affiliation.

Interestingly, the consecutive forms are only attested within the prose frame narrative, but nowhere in sections containing direct discourse (beginning at I.5). Significantly, the preference for freestanding verbal forms in direct discourse operates even in environments where the *wāw* consecutive would be apposite; i.e. when the narration describes a sequence of actions in past time (e.g. יָאָלָל, I.6, rather than יָאָלָל as in I.2). This disparity can be explained if the *wāw* consecutive is understood to be a narrative form that did not feature in the spoken dialect represented in the DAPT. In that case its omission in direct discourse can be viewed as mimesis of vernacular speech.\(^{33}\)

6.3. **Phonology/Orthography**

6.3.1. **Correspondence of *ḍ***

One of the features most frequently cited in favour of an Aramaic classification for the Deir 'Alla dialect is the representation of etymological *ḍ* by *qôp*, as in OA and Samalian, rather than *ṣade* as in the Canaanite dialects (ךֵּרֶךְ < *drq, I.15, cf. Aram. כַּרְךְ < *drq I.15; נָקַר < *ndr, II.5, 12, cf. Heb. נָבַר < *ndr; and (possibly) חֲלָק < *hld, II.11, cf. Heb.

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\(^{33}\) Cf. the discussion in Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of the Waw-Consecutive: Northwest Semitic Evidence from Ugarit to Qumran* (HSM 39; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1991), 21–27. This does not invalidate the suggestion of oral transmission in the preceding chapter; rather it may simply be a product of the narrative register.

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However, here too the picture is not quite as clear as it may at first appear, since Hackett has observed that this is properly a matter of orthography rather than phonology. Heuhnergard expressed the point particularly clearly, stating: “the orthography of the text is, everyone agrees, based on Aramaic precursors; therefore, if [*ṭ] remained a distinctive consonant in the dialect, it is only reasonable to expect that the scribe would write it with the same character as was used in Aramaic texts”.

6.3.2. The diphthongs

Diphthongs remain uncontracted in all positions throughout the DAPT (ليل, I.1; מושב, I.6;POSIT, II.6, II.7; ו, II.9; בית, II.11; ו, II.13, etc.). Diphthong retention is characteristic of Aramaic. However, as the same situation is attested in Judean (and possibly Samarian) Hebrew (cf. §3.2.3), this too cannot be considered a distinctively Aramaic isogloss.


6.3.3. Non-assimilation of anarthrous 

In Biblical Hebrew and Moabite the $nûn$ of the preposition $נ$ regularly assimilates when prefixed to a noun. When the preposition precedes the definite article, however, it appears separately in its full form (cf. *GKC*, §101a–b).\(^3\)\(^8\) In Old Aramaic and Samalian $נ$ resisted assimilation in all environments. However, Ammonite presents a mixed picture: $nûn$ is assimilated in תֵאל, “from Elat” (Heshbon 4:4),\(^3\)\(^9\) but apparently not inGGLE $נ$ “figs from” (Heshbon 11:2).\(^4\)\(^0\) Therefore, the non-assimilation of anarthrous $נ$ resembles Aramaic (c.f. I.3; II.8x3), but is not exclusive to the Aramaic group.

6.4. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a notoriously insecure basis for linguistic classification.\(^4\)\(^1\) Nevertheless, a number of lexemes in the DAPT have been isolated as distinctively Aramaic, or as having characteristically Aramaic connotations. These include: בֵּר, “son” (I.2, I.4; cf. Canaanite בָּן; ז, “one” (II.10; cf. Canaanite אֵשׁ; מַלַא, “to come” (I.1); נָר, “to flee” (cf. Aram. מָלַא, “to enter” (II.7, perhaps I.4). On the other hand there are a number of lexemes that suggest a Canaanite affiliation: פָּלַע, “to do” (I.1; cf. Aram. אָבֹר); impv. לָבָר (I.5, הָלַךְ; cf., Aram. impv. derived from אֶזֶר); רָאשׁ, “to see” (I.5, alongside חָזָה; דָּבָר, “to speak” (II.17). Two of these lexemes, בֵּר and ז, warrant closer attention, due to the fact that they seem to have been conditioned by characteristically Aramean sound changes.

Much has been written about the significance of the noun בֵּר in the patronymic “Balaam son of Beor”. Early in the discussion Joseph Naveh drew attention to the fact that בֵּר is also used in a patronymic in the

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\(^3\)\(^8\) Cf. Garr, *Dialect geography of Syria-Palestine*, 40–44.

\(^3\)\(^9\) Ibid, 43.


Phoenician Kilamuwa inscription (KAI 24, line 1; כלמו֯בר֯חי), arguing on this basis that its use in a patronymic at Deir ‘Alla need not imply that the DAPT reflects an Aramaic dialect.42 However, Dennis Pardee countered that the use of בָּרָּה in KAI 24 is otherwise unique.43 Furthermore, he argued that in the DAPT בָּרָּה is not strictly speaking part of the PN, but an independent noun linking two proper nouns, and, as such, it cannot simply be explained as part of the naming formula.44 The latter point is underscored by the levelling of Balaam’s name in the biblical narrative where it is written בְּלוּעם בֵּן בָּעָרוּ (e.g. Num 22:5).45 Pardee’s objections have some force; but Huehnergard has responded that as there are no unbound examples of the noun in the DAPT it is impossible to know whether בָּר or בֵּן was the standard form in the Deir ’Alla dialect.46 Moreover, in response to the second point, Huehnergard has highlighted the fact that in I.2 the patronymic is written scriptio continua. This reinforces the impression that the patronymic was conceived as a discrete formula, which may have been external to the dialect of the DAPT.47 At all events, the presence of בָּר in Balaam’s dialect cannot be used to determine the form of the word for “son” at Deir ‘Alla generally.48

44 Huehnergard, “Remarks on the Classification of the Northwest Semitic Languages”, 289, n.18.
48 On the common etymology of בֵּן and בָּר, see; David Testen, “The Significance of Aramaic r < *n,” JNES 44 (1985):143–46, who argued for proto-Semitic *bn-, explaining the Aramaic orthography by the conjectured phonological rule: proto-Semitic *n becomes r when it is the second element of an initial consonant cluster Cn- > Cr- (cf. also בָּרָּה בָּעָרוּ <
The second lexeme תר, “one”, is equally uncertain, owing to the disagreement regarding its origins and evolution. On the one hand, Edward Lipiński has reconstructed proto-Semitic *ḥd-, which he argued in some dialects underwent secondary development with the addition of a supplementary root morpheme to bring it into conformity with the triconsonantal system. To support this reconstruction he cited a number of derivatives that appear to reflect the primitive *ḥd- pattern (e.g. Arab. دار, “one”, Heb. תר, “union”).

On the other hand, John Huehnergard, adducing the widespread attestation of forms with initial ʾālep, reconstructed proto-Semitic *ʾḥd-, which, he argued, underwent aphaeresis in Aramaic. Consequently, it is not clear whether תר in the DAPT should be understood as a proto-Semitic retention, a shared innovation, or the result of language contact.

To summarise, while neither בר nor תר may be considered reliable indicators of Aramaic affiliation, in the case of the DAPT they only suggest the probability of linguistic contact with Aramaic at some point.

In addition to these Aramaic and Canaanite lexical isoglosses, Edward Lipiński has argued that there might be an Arabian substratum in the dialect of the DAPT. While I do not support all of Lipiński’s readings, the restoration ḥpš, “flitter-mouse, bat” (I.10), seems likely for contextual reasons. To this we may possibly add the noun sqr, “heat”

*Lipiński, Semitic Languages, 281, §35.3, cf. 198, §27.26. Interestingly, תר is attested in I.5 (תר), rather than the more common Aramaic verb תר.

50 Huehnergard, “What is Aramaic?”, 266, 277, and esp. 269, n.19.

51 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 170.
According to Lipinski, the Arabian substratum might also be reflected in the PNN. Following Martin Noth, Lipiński argued thatבלעם should be interpreted in light of Arabic بلغ, “eloquent” (cf. בלעם בן-בעור, Gen 36:32)—with mimation as is common in Arabic proper names—naming that the names Blʿ and Blġ are attested in North Arabian inscriptions. As for Balaam’s patronymic, Lipiński observed that in the DAPT is identical to Sabaean בור “camel, beast of burden” (cf. BH בער, cattle, beast of burden), noting that the cognateجمل, “Camel”, is a common PN in the Arabic world. Following from this suggestion, Lipiński observed that a number of the Canaanitisms in the DAPT might also be understood in terms of Arabic influence; e.g. ṛ’h, “to see” (I.5); ṛḥמ vulture (I.8).

6.5. DISCUSSION

Many of the most distinctive isoglosses in the DAPT—especially the Canaanitisms—can be regarded as proto-Semitic retentions, and it is this pattern of linguistic retentions that led McCarter to describe the Deir ‘Alla dialect as “extremely conservative in comparison to the Northwest Semitic languages in general”. Five Isoglosses can confidently be identified with

52 As examples of Arabian lexical items Lipiński also adduced ypʿ, to approach” (I.2), ygʿ, “to pierce” (I.2), ʿmn, “to calm oneself” (I.3), ṭḥγ, “to glow” (I.7); Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 170.


54 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 111; cf. Joan Copeland Biella, Dictionary of Old South Arabian: Sabaean Dialect (HSS 25; Chico, Ca.: Scholars, 1982), 51. Furthermore, as Lipiński noted the plural nounבערים, “beasts of burden”, is apparently attested in Heshbon Ostracon XI; cf. Cross, “Heshbon Ostracon XI”, 147.

55 Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 170.

56 McCarter, “The Dialect of the Deir ‘Alla Texts”, 94. As argued by McCarter, this conservatism might be related to the literary register of the DAPT.
Aramaic innovations: viz. the phonological merger *ḍ > q; the 3.m.s suffix ḫ-; and the lexemes ṭa and ṭi. Of these, the first might simply be explained as reflecting Aramaic influence on the orthography, the third is external to the DAPT, and the last two might simply reflect linguistic contact with an Aramaic speech community. This leaves only ḫ-, which is of uncertain value, but seems to be an Aramaism.\textsuperscript{57} What are we to make of all this?

In part, this question is compounded by the difficulty involved in determining precisely what is meant by Aramaic. Huehnergard has convincingly argued that prior to the Official Aramaic (= IA) of the Persian period, Aramaic was typified by dialectical diversity.\textsuperscript{58} For historical reasons, it has typically been assumed that the most likely source of Aramaic influence at Deir ʿAlla would have been the Damascene dialect which was spread to the region with the Aramean imperial expansions of the 9th century (see §7.4). Building on this assumption, Blum observed that the only extant lengthy example (i.e. more than 5 lines) of Damascene-Aramaic is the roughly contemporary Tel Dan stele, which he averred bears no substantial linguistic difference to the DAPT.\textsuperscript{59} However, this is a false equivalence. It is not the presence of Aramaic-type features in the DAPT that is in question, but the nature of the relationship between the Aramaic and Canaanite isoglosses. Crucially, with the exception of the wāw consecutive—which is apparently also attested in the Zakkur inscription—none of the Canaanite isoglosses (or their Aramaic counterparts) is attested in the Tel Dan Stele.\textsuperscript{60} As such, it is impossible to know the extent to which the pattern of linguistic retentions that gives the

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Pardee, “The Linguistic Classification of the Deir ʿAlla Text”, 103.

\textsuperscript{58} Conversely, for the equivalent situation in Hebrew, see Young, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew.

\textsuperscript{59} “m.E. keine substanziellen Sprachdifferenzen gegenüber diesen aufweist”; Erhard Blum, “Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir ʿAlla, 597.

\textsuperscript{60} Nor is there a situation in which they would be expected in any of the preserved lines, meaning their non-appearance is a “Zero-” feature.
Canaanite flavour to the Deir 'Alla dialect might also be characteristic of Damascene-Aramaic. In fact, the closest parallel to the Deir 'Alla dialect in terms of its archaic profile seems to be the geographically remote Samalian dialect of ancient Zincirli. If anything, this testifies to the overall diversity of the Northwest Semitic dialects in general during the first half of the first millennium B.C.E. In short, the epigraphic evidence is still too scanty to permit categorical pronouncements regarding the classification of the Deir 'Alla dialect.

Nevertheless, the linguistic profile of the DAPT maps well onto the dialectical continua of the region, and, at a purely impressionistic level, it may easily be understood as a local dialect. Even so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that some form of Aramaic influence would have been felt in the region following the Damascene expansion of the 9th century. Indeed, as noted in the preceding chapter (see §5.2.2), it is possible that the official measures “of the gate”—which incorporate the distinctive Aramaic enclitic article—attest the incorporation of Deir 'Alla into the imperial economy (perhaps indirectly). And it may be to this period that the Aramean influence in the vocabulary and orthography should be attributed.

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62 See especially Young, who has argued for a higher degree of similarity between pre-exilic Hebrew and Aramaic than has commonly been assumed; Young, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew, 60–61; cf. Geoffrey Khan, “The Language of the Old Testament”, in The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From Beginnings to 600 (eds. James C. Paget and Joachim Schaper; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 17.
63 A similar assessment was formed by McCarter, who, furthermore, cited the influence of the Aramaic script in writing of Ammonite as evidence of the cultural influence of Damascus on northern and central Jordan (on the development of local script traditions, see below); McCarter, “The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Texts”, 97. But that is not to say that the seeming Aramaisms should altogether be attributed to the 9th century; on the diversity of pre-exilic Hebrew generally, and the probability that many of the features commonly identified as Aramaisms should be understood as true Hebraisms lying beneath the homogeneity of Classical Hebrew, see e.g. Young, Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew.
6.6. Palaeography

The direction for much of the palaeographical analysis of the script of the DAPT was established by the early studies of Naveh and Cross. In the same year that Franken published his initial report of the discovery of the plaster texts, Naveh responded with a brief palaeographic analysis. At that stage Naveh’s intention was to correct Franken’s preliminary dating of the text (on archaeological grounds) to the Persian period. Working from the black and white photograph published by Franken, Naveh argued that the script belonged to an early stage in the development of the Aramaic cursive tradition and dated it to the middle of the 8th century; although he allowed that it might be a couple of decades earlier. Shortly thereafter, Cross published his view that the Deir ʿAlla script should be identified with the emergent Ammonite “national” script. Cross initially supported Naveh’s dating to the mid-8th century, but later lowered his own dating to the middle of the 7th century as new evidence for the development of the Ammonite cursive series came to light. Subsequent studies have tended to align themselves with either of these options.

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65 Joseph Naveh, “The Date of the Deir ʿAllā Inscription in the Aramaic Script,” IEJ 17 (1967): 256–58; cf. idem, IEJ 29 (1979): 133–34. It should be stressed that Naveh’s palaeographic identification was made prior to, and independent of, the subsequent linguistic debate. Indeed, Naveh subsequently avowed scepticism regarding the classification of the language of the DAPT as Aramaic; cf. Joseph Naveh, IEJ 29 (1979): 135–36.
67 For the initial comments concerning dating see Cross, “Epigraphical Notes on the Ammān Citadel Inscription”, 14, n.2; for the revised date cf. idem, “Notes on the
Hence, in the careful palaeographical study published in the editio princeps, van der Kooij, like Naveh before him, opted for an Aramaic affiliation; although, due to a combination of palaeographical and historical factors, he settled on a date somewhere between those proposed by Naveh and Cross (ca. 700 B.C.E. ± 25 years).68 However, he subsequently raised this estimate to ca. 800 B.C.E., in order to bring it into alignment with the calibrated $^{14}$C dates (cf. §7.3.5).69 On the other hand, Hackett followed Cross in identifying the script with the Ammonite series (citing especially the characteristic developments of the $hê$, and $kāp$), and proposed that it should be dated to the beginning of the 7th century.70 Roughly the same conclusions were also reached by Puech; although, he defined the Ammonite tradition more loosely than did Hackett and Cross, and later came to attribute the script to the first half of the 8th century.71

At the heart of this debate is the nature and character of the Ammonite national script. Broadly speaking, the Ammonite script is understood to be a regional development of the Aramaic lapidary and cursive series, which is characterised by its highly conservative nature, coupled with certain innovative features (these will be discussed below).72 The description and classification of this series owes much to the palaeographic studies by Larry Herr and Frank Moore Cross, and has

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69 Cf. van der Kooij, “The Identity of Trans-Jordanian Alphabetic Writing in the Iron Age”, 109. This revised dating was first proposed by André Lemaire, “Les inscriptions de Deir 'Alla et la littérature araméenne antique”, 271–74; cf. Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 104–06.


received considerable attention in the last four decades. However, the definition and significance of this regional development is debated. Naveh has argued that the Ammonites continued to use the Aramaic script, but with certain “local peculiarities”. While, van der Kooij, following his painstaking work on the ductus of the Northwest Semitic script series of the first Millennium B.C.E., has argued that the innovative “Ammonite” features belong to a wider southern-Levantine development, stemming from the changing angles brought about by adjustments in the handling techniques of the writing implement in ink based scripts, which, in turn, came to be reflected in the letter forms of the respective lapidary series (cf. §3.6.1).

The issue goes beyond a simple question of nomenclature. If it can be shown that the Ammonite script represents a deliberate and concerted attempt at differentiation from the Aramaic tradition, this would suggest a self-conscious desire for cultural differentiation. Given that Cross and Hackett place the Deir ‘Alla script close to the inception of the process, the DAPT could conceivably reflect this motivation.

In what follows I provide a brief discussion of some of the most distinctive features of the Deir ‘Alla script. As with Chapter 3, I have not attempted to provide a comprehensive description and classification of the script, but have focussed primarily on the question of differentiating between the Aramaic and Ammonite series.

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76 Cf., for a similar situation in the context of the Hebrew national script, Seth L. Sanders, The Invention of Hebrew, 126–27.
ālep—The ālep retains the traditional eighth century Phoenician and Aramaic shape, with no hint of the star-shaped development evinced in the seventh century Aramaic cursive of the Assur Ostracon and the Saqqara papyrus.

bêt, dālet, rêš, and ‘ayin—The heads of the round-headed letters remain closed, unlike the Aramaic cursive forms, which tended to open from the late-eighth century onward (as attested by the Nimrud Ostracon).

hê—Both Hackett and Puech identified two separate forms of the hê: one in which the S-shaped downward stroke is attached to the horizontal upper bar, and one in which the S-stroke is unconnected, or else attached to the vertical shaft by an elongated ligature running parallel to the upper bar.77 An example of the former type can clearly be seen at the end of II.9; however, van der Kooij has argued that this shape is anomalous, being caused by the scribe starting the S-stroke too close to the upper bar (although, cf. the hê in the supralinear correction to I.1).78

The typological relationship of this S-shaped down stroke is disputed. Hackett, following Cross, suggested that this form should be viewed as a precursor to the distinctive hê of the Tell Sīrān bottle (９), suggesting that the latter may have developed via the elongation of the horizontal of the S-stroke so that they connected with the vertical shaft.79 However, it seems that the precursor of the Tell Sīrān hê was the two-bar form which appears on some 7th century Ammonite seals (cf. WSS 865  heel; 928  heel); in which case, the vertical strokes and closed

78 Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 62; van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 250.
79 Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā, 11.
head of the Tell Sīrān hê must be interpreted as a secondary development. This renders a development from the Deir ʿAlla hê extremely unlikely. On the other hand, the Deir ʿAlla hê bears a considerable resemblance to the hê of the later Aramaic cursive series, which is attested in the Assur ostracon and Saqqara papyrus.\(^{80}\) On the strength of this similarity, it seems reasonable to infer that the S-stroke retained its basic shape, but migrated upward (a development that is apparently already attested \textit{inadvertently} at Deir ʿAlla), rather than extending laterally, as proposed by Cross and Hackett.\(^{81}\) As such, it seems likely that the Deir ʿAlla hê and the Tell Sīrān hê belong to different evolutionary trajectories.

Finally, the single archaic three-bar hê (II.8) may suggest the sort of subconscious error (i.e. reversion) typical of someone who has learned to form their letters in a particular fashion and then learned to form them again in a different way. This may also account for the degree of variation attested in the forms with either connected or unconnected S-strokes. This explanation, in turn, may suggest a conscious innovation or emulation of a divergent form perhaps for reasons of cultural association or disassociation (see below).\(^{82}\)

\textit{zayin} — The \textit{zayin} and yôd show none of the tendency to straighten that is typical of the Aramaic cursive of the seventh century.\(^{83}\)

The Z–shaped \textit{zayin} is already attested in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century Hazael Booty Inscription from Samos, which also shows other similarities,

\(^{80}\) This point was stressed by Naveh, “The Date of the Deir ʿAlla Inscription in Aramaic Script”, 257, 258.

\(^{81}\) Although, it should be noted that both possibilities are not mutually exclusive, as either development might have occurred at different places or at different times.

\(^{82}\) An alternative possibility is that the hê reflects the influence of a more conservative lapidary hê; note that no lapidary hê is attested at Deir ʿAlla.

most notably in the shape and stance of the forward leaning qôp, and the characteristically small and high lāmed and elongated tāw.84 The older .teacher-shaped zayin is still attested in the lapidary script of the Tel Dan inscription, although the vertical shaft is sloped, while the roughly contemporary Zakkur inscription uses a fully developed Z-shaped zayin.

ḥêt—The ḥêt is typically considered one of the most significant letters for dating the Deir ‘Alla script. One of the characteristic developments of the Aramaic cursive tradition is the simplification of ḥêt by the omission of one or two of the three horizontal bars.85 By contrast, the two-bar ḥêt was preserved in the Ammonite tradition until the end of the 7th century.86 However, two-bar forms are also attested in the Mesha inscription and in the pottery inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (cf. Kajr3.2, 3.9).87

Cross and Hackett understood the standard form of ḥêt in the Deir ‘Alla script to be written with two bars (although Hackett recognised a combination of two- and three-bar forms).88 Meanwhile, van der Kooij, based on his microscopic analysis, argued that a three-bar form was written in all instances.89 However, in many places the bars are drawn

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85 Single bar forms are already attested in the earliest examples of Aramaic cursive; e.g. the Hamath bricks, mid-8th century B.C.E.; cf. Naveh, The Development of the Aramaic Script, 12.
86 Cf. the two-bar ḥêt of the Tell Sīrān bottle inscription; although, note that single-bar forms are more common on seals; e.g. WSS 867, 868, 874.
87 The comparison with the Mesha inscription was also noted by Cross, “Epigraphic Notes on the Ammān Citadel Inscription”, 14.
so close together as to be almost superimposed, making it difficult to determine precisely how many bars were intended.

Hackett has suggested that the steep incline of the horizontals in the Deir 'Alla ḥēt anticipate the reverse N-shaped ḥēt in the Ammonite cursive of Tell Heshbon Ostraca IV and XI. However, a similar development can also be seen in the later Aramaic cursive of the Starkey-tablet, 571/70 B.C.E.\(^{90}\)

\(\text{ṭêt}\)—The elliptical ḥēt in the DAPT is open at the left, with a single cross-bar slanting from the upper left to the lower right. The left-to-right cross-bar is unusual in the Northwest Semitic scripts, the only parallels occurring in the closed forms of the Amman Citadel and Bar Rakib inscriptions,\(^{91}\) and in the open cursive forms found in Tell el-Mazār ostracon III,\(^{92}\) and perhaps Karj4.1.\(^{93}\) However, there is little to connect these forms and suggest an evolutionary relationship. Consequently, the

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\(^{92}\) Puech, “Approches paléographiques de l’inscription sur plâtre de Deir 'Alla”, 232, includes this form in his comparative script chart of the Ammonite cursive series, although he does not draw the connection explicitly. The editors of the Tell el-Mazar ostracon, following Cross, identified the script as belonging to the Ammonite series of the mid-6\(^{th}\) century; cf. Yassine and Teixidor, “Ammonite and Aramaic Inscriptions from Tell El-Mazār in Jordan”, 47. This parallel is particularly interesting, as Tell el-Mazār is located only 3 km North of Deir 'Alla, and may suggest a regional development; although the difficulty of interpreting the evidence from Tell el-Mazār has been signaled by Pardee, who has observed, in relation to the question of dialect, that as the ostracon contains a letter, it might reflect the conventions of the area from which it was sent, rather than the immediate vicinity of the Tell. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the letter to indicate the location of the sender. (Pardee, review of Jo Ann Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text from Deir 'Allā}, 141–42).

\(^{93}\) Cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Allā”, 252; note that the distortion of the two ḥēts in Karj4.1 makes it difficult to determine precisely what shape was intended.
omission of the right-to-left cross-bar from the ṭēt might reasonably be understood as a parallel development.\textsuperscript{94}

This inference is perhaps indirectly supported by the remarkable similarity, in both shape and ductus, between the ṭēt and the qōp at Deir ʿAlla.\textsuperscript{95} This degree of similarity is unparalleled in any of the other known examples of the Northwest Semitic scripts, and might suggest that the unique form of the Deir ʿAlla ṭēt was an internal innovation, developing in tandem with the qōp.

\textit{kāp}—The \textit{kāp} is one of the most important diagnostic letters for the Deir ʿAlla script. The broad headed \textit{kāp} is typically compared to the closed-triangle \textit{kāp} of the Ammonite series (cf. the Tell Sīrān inscription and Heshbon Ostracon IV).\textsuperscript{96} In a number of instances the Deir ʿAlla \textit{kāp} is written with a simple triangular head (e.g. II.3 ⌁, pl.12, and II.9 ⌁, pl.5). However, several examples also include a short vertical tick on the lower left-hand edge of the head (e.g. frag. viii(e) ⌁, pl.13, II.14 ⌁, pl.11). Hackett has argued that this tick was inadvertently caused by the motion of writing the head, but in a number of instances it appears to be additional and deliberate (esp. frag. viii(e) ⌁).\textsuperscript{97} Significantly, the closest parallel to these forms is found in the \textit{kāps} of the KAPT, for which no Aramaic affiliation has been suspected (cf. \textit{Kajr} 4.1, in which the tick is apparently formed in the same manner as at Deir ʿAlla, i.e. with a small v–shaped motion, see fig.3.3). Be that as it may, van der

\textsuperscript{94} In particular, with reference to van der Kooij’s arguments, it should be noted that this development did not take place in all of the examples of broad-nibbed writing, with the classic right-to-left cross bar being far more common.

\textsuperscript{95} Both are formed by three strokes—two forming the elliptical head and one, extended to form the stem of the qōp, and truncated to form the cross-bar of the ṭēt.

\textsuperscript{96} Cf. WSS 861, 881, and 876; van der Kooij also cites related forms in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century Phoenician lapidary inscriptions of Tabnit and Eshmunazar II, found at Sidon, and the two temple tariffs from Cyprus, cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 250, 253.

\textsuperscript{97} Cf. Hackett, \textit{The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā}, 14.
Kooij has argued that while the closed triangular form is not attested in Aramaic, it anticipates the later kāps of the Sefire inscriptions. As such, the significance of the Deir ʿAlla kāp is ambiguous; its origin seems to be related to those of the triangular head of the Ammonite series, but it may still be related to the overall development of the Aramaic kāp.

mēm—Preserves the archaic form with a horizontal double-cupped head. There is no evidence of the tendency in the later Aramaic series for the head to straighten, which anticipated the development of the curved head intersected by a single line.

ṣāmek—The clearest ṣāmek can be found on the infra-red photographs of fragment v(q). Based on this photograph it is clear that the head of the ṣāmek does not reflect the zigzag movement that is seen in the Aramaic cursive series from the Nimrud ostracon onward, but was formed by three distinct strokes.

ṣādē—In the DAPT the tail of the ṣādē is formed by a single C-shaped stroke (e.g. I.6), which is a stylised simplification of the Z-shaped stroke typical of the Aramaic scripts. Comparable shapes occur in the Amman Citadel inscription, the Nimrud ostracon, and perhaps Heshbon ostracon IV. The form in the Sīrān bottle inscription is more like the Aramaic Z-shaped ṣādē, but without the third stroke of the tail.

qôp—As noted above, the qôp has an open elliptical head with a marked forward lean. The basic shape resembles the lapidary qôp of the Tel

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100 Cf. Hackett, The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā, 15; van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 249. For photograph see Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, pl.13.

Dan and Zakkur inscriptions, and the lone qôp in the ninth century Hazael booty inscription, albeit with closed head. Interestingly, comparable forms, with narrow open heads, occur in the “Phoenician” cursive of the KAPT.

tāw—Fits well into the progression of the Phoenician and Aramaic tāws of the eighth–seventh centuries (cf. §3.6). Once again it is interesting to note the presence of a similar shape in the inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (esp. Kajr4.1, 4.3).

6.6.1. DISCUSSION

In a number of respects the script of the DAPT resembles the Aramaic of the late-9th–early-8th centuries B.C.E. (cf. the Tel Dan, Zakkur and Hazael booty inscriptions). This can most easily be explained as a result of Aramaic influence in the region in the 9th century B.C.E. (see §7.4). Unfortunately, however, the paucity of ink-based inscriptions in the Aramaic and Ammonite scripts prior to the 7th century makes it difficult to know precisely how this script is situated in relation to the development of other cursive scripts in the region. That being said, van der Kooij’s argument that the characteristic ductus of both the DAPT and Ammonite series can be attributed to the influence of the Aramaic pedagogical traditions seems to be convincing. Moreover, this interpretation can be supported archaeologically, since the strongest indications of contact with the Ammonite cultural sphere come from strata above the DAPT (see §7.3.5).

Be that as it may, certain letters—most notably the hê—suggest that the script of the DAPT should not be classified as either Aramaic or Ammonite, but a distinct local script, manifesting the scribe’s self-

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conscious desire to distinguish him/herself from the dominant Aramaic tradition.

As an aside regarding the date of the script, certain letters, such as ḥê and kāp, resemble developments in the Aramaic cursive series of the seventh and sixth centuries, albeit with a distinctive local flavour. However, the fact that the script did not participate in other innovations of the later Aramaic cursive (especially, the opening of the round headed letters and simplification of the ḥêt), suggests a terminus ante quem before the end of the 8th century B.C.E. (cf. the Nimrud ostracon, in which these traits are clearly attested). A number of letters (e.g. ḥê, zayin, kāp and tāw) are more developed than the lapidary inscriptions cited above, but allowance should be made for the more conservative nature of lapidary scripts. All of this suggests that a date near the beginning or middle of the 8th century is probable. This accords well with the archaeological and historical evidence, and is supported by the general superficial similarity to the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud plaster scripts which are also dated to this period (cf. §4.6).

6.7. CONCLUSIONS

At an impressionistic level, it is tempting to conclude that the DAPT were written by a local scribe trained in the Aramaic (Damascene) pedagogical tradition, but writing in a local dialect and (nascent) script. This, in turn, might suggest a conscious attempt by the scribe—and the community he/she represented—to separate themselves from Aramean hegemony.


105 In this I concur with Lipiński, Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics II, 104–06. Lipiński also noted the parallel with Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, although he focussed principally on the medium. As noted above, similarities between the scripts have also been identified by van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Allā”, 252, esp. n.15.
(pace Blum and Schmidt). On the other hand, there is no evidence that the DAPT should be connected directly to the Ammonite national script series. This accords well with the archaeological evidence, which (as will be seen) suggests that at the time the DAPT were written, Deir 'Alla was a comparatively modest community, integrated into the regional valley economy, but with trade contacts to the west.

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106 Once again, the concept of anti-language comes to mind.
CHAPTER 7

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE
DEIR ‘ALLA PLASTER TEXTS

7.1. TOPOGRAPHIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Tell Deir ‘Alla is situated at the fertile southern end of the central Jordan Valley. Today the tell is framed on three sides by natural boundaries, the high Amman plateau to the east, the Jordan River to the west and the Zarqa (= bib. Jabbok) River to the south (on the course of the latter see §7.5).

The climate during the Bronze and Iron Ages seems to have been roughly similar to that of the present day, with hot dry summers bringing little or no precipitation followed by wet and humid winters. When rain does come to the valley, it typically falls in short heavy downpours between the months of October and April. The heavy winter rains apparently presented a perennial problem for the inhabitants of the tell who repeatedly had to raise the level of internal floors to keep pace with the rising street levels caused by accumulated sediment washed from the mud-brick walls. Henk Franken, described just such a process during the

1 Although, there are paleoclimatic indications that during the Iron Age there was a small drop in average rainfall and rise in average temperature; cf. Kaptijn, Life on the Watershed, 18–19.

2 Ibid, 16–17, esp. fig. 2.3.

second season of excavations: “[h]eavy winter rain, such as we experienced this year in Deir ‘Alla, washes down a considerable amount of mud from the roofs of houses and the accumulated dust and dirt of a mud brick town.”

Notwithstanding these downpours, the total annual rainfall at Deir ‘Alla varies greatly, and this unpredictability, together with the limited duration of the wet-season and high evaporation rates during the dry-season, make the local environment ill-suited to agriculture on all but a very modest scale. Eva Kaptijn has argued that this difficulty was circumvented by a complex network of irrigation canals that watered the valley. This has potentially profound implications for the geo-political alignment of the inhabitants of Deir ‘Alla, since Kaptijn has argued that the population density of the valley during the Iron Age II would only have been sustainable if settlements upstream shared access to water equitably with settlements downstream. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that in this period Deir ‘Alla was integrated into a cooperative socio-economic network in the valley.

7.2. EXPLORATION AND EXCAVATION

The first modern description of tell Deir ‘Alla appears in Selah Merrill’s *East of the Jordan* (1881). Merrill visited the tell, probably in 1877, during his tour of the north-eastern Transjordan. He reported that the mound was covered with broken pottery of “many colors and qualities”, and noted the

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Kaptijn, “Settling the steppe”, 265–84. Although direct access at Deir ‘Alla to the Zerqa river might have meant that the tell could exist semi-independently of this network.
presence of ruins on the northern terrace. Merrill also repeated a local tradition that the mound was once occupied by a city.8

Deir ‘Alla was briefly described several times in subsequent decades. In 1903, G. Hölscher and H. Thiersch visited the tell, describing it as a steeply sloped tell on which Roman and older sherds were found.9 W. F. Albright, also visited the site during a tour of the central Jordan Valley in the spring of 1920. He described Deir ‘Alla as “a beautiful mound, one of the finest in shape that I have ever seen, but small”, and noted the presence of sherds dating from the Bronze and early Iron Ages.10 But these early discussions were predominantly occupied by the identification of the tell (see below). It was not until Nelson Glueck’s monumental *Survey of Eastern Palestine* that a detailed description of the site and its remains was published.11 Glueck referred to some foundational remains visible on the summit and large numbers of sherds dating from the Bronze and Iron Ages.12

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12 Glueck, “Explorations in Eastern Palestine IV”, 310.
The first scientific excavations at Deir ʿAlla were conducted over four seasons from 1960–1964 by a Dutch team under the direction of Dr. H. J. Franken of the university of Leiden.\textsuperscript{13} The stated aim of the expedition was to use controlled stratigraphic analysis to refine the relative chronology of Palestinian pottery from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age.\textsuperscript{14} The team commenced a second expedition in 1967 with the intention to extend the excavated area to the east and southeast. It was in the final days of this season’s excavations that the plaster texts were uncovered in the Phase IX stratum, near the summit of the tell.\textsuperscript{15} However, the war of 1967 brought a halt to the project.


\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Franken, “The Excavations at Deir ʿAllā in Jordan”, 386.

In 1976, excavations recommenced as a joint project between Leiden University, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.\textsuperscript{16} The aim of the renewed excavation was a diachronic settlement study of the tell, which focussed, in part, on the expansion and clarification of the Phase IX remains.\textsuperscript{17} In 1980, Yarmouk University joined the project.

More recently, Deir ʿAlla has featured at the heart of the \textit{Settling the Steppe Project}, directed by Gerrit van der Kooij and Diederik Meijer at the University of Leiden.\textsuperscript{18} This project aims at a major multi-disciplinary regional study of settlement practices and habitation in the central Jordan Valley, and has already added valuable data on the ancient climate and settlement dynamics of Deir ʿAlla and neighbouring sites.\textsuperscript{19} Reference should also be made at this point to a major technical study of faience and ceramic production at Deir ʿAlla, which was recently conducted by Niels Groot at Leiden University.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{17} Cf. van der Kooij, “Deir ʿAlla, Tell”, 339; Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, , 18–17.


\textsuperscript{19} Major publications already completed under the auspices of this project include Kaptijn, \textit{Life on the Watershed}; Petit, \textit{Settlement Dynamics in the Middle Jordan Valley}.

\textsuperscript{20} Niels C. F. Groot, “All the Work of Artisans: Reconstructing Society at Tell Deir ʿAllā through the Study of Ceramic Traditions: Studies of Late Bronze Age Faience Vessels and Iron IIc-III Ceramics from Tell Deir ʿAllā, Jordan” (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2011)
7.3. **Tell Deir ‘Alla in Diachronic Perspective**

The settlement of the tell seems to have fluctuated between periods of occupation and periods of abandonment. As a result, the character of the site reflects different influences in different periods.

7.3.1. **Chalcolithic**

The earliest ceramic finds on the tell date from the Chalcolithic period; however, it has been suggested that these sherds were probably brought from a nearby site, embedded in the clay that was transported to Deir ‘Alla for the construction of the Late Bronze Age terrace (see below).\(^{21}\)

7.3.2. **Middle Bronze Age (MBA)**

MBA remains were found in an area of approximately 100m\(^2\) at the south-eastern base of the Tell. Several MBA occupation phases have been identified, but the best preserved is the earliest, dating from the MBA II. Remains from this period include heavy mud-brick walls that were preserved up to 2.5m high in places. Other notable finds include two small bent bronze objects (one of them trident shaped) found at the bottom of a stone-lined pit in one of the rooms.\(^{22}\) The function of these objects is unknown.

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7.3.3. Late Bronze Age (LBA)

The LBA remains are among the most extensive on the tell, occupying both the northern and southern slopes. Early in this period the tell was artificially extended to the north. On top of this artificial terrace the excavators discovered the remains of a large structure, which Franken interpreted as a sanctuary. Several successive phases of the LBA

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25 The sanctuary and associated pottery has been published in full in Franken, *Excavations at Tell Deir ‘Alla: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary*. Moreover, a helpful summary of the
sanctuary have been identified (Phases A–E), but the most thoroughly excavated is the last, Phase E.\textsuperscript{26} It seems that the floor and roof levels of the sanctuary had been raised a number of times, apparently in order to keep pace with the continually rising surface levels elsewhere on the tell (see above), suggesting that the sanctuary was used more or less continuously over a prolonged period.\textsuperscript{27} The Phase E sanctuary, together with the associated settlement, was apparently destroyed by an earthquake and concomitant fire. This destruction has been dated to the twelfth century on the basis of a faience vase bearing the cartouche of Queen Taousert, discovered on the floor of the cella.\textsuperscript{28}

The destruction of Phase E was apparently followed by an attempt to rebuild the sanctuary (Phase F); but this too was destroyed by fire prior to completion.\textsuperscript{29} Phase F was in turn followed by two short phases. Phase G was also destroyed by an intense conflagration. The next phase, Phase H, shows signs of fortification, leading Eveline van der Steen to suggest that the destruction of the sanctuary may have been followed by a period of political unrest. Historically, she attributed this to waning Egyptian influence in the region.\textsuperscript{30}

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\textsuperscript{26} For a detailed description of the findings from each of the successive phases see H. J. Franken, \textit{Excavations at Tell Deir \textquotesingle Allā: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary}, (Louvian: Peeters, 1992), esp. 12–13.

\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Franken, “The Excavations at Deir \textquotesingle Allā in Jordan: 2nd Season”, 363–64.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 365, and pl.5; idem, “Excavations at Deir \textquotesingle Allā, Season 1964: Preliminary Report”, 420; idem, \textit{Excavations at Tell Deir \textquotesingle Allā: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary}, fig. 3.9–5, pl.4; J. Yoyotte, “Un souvenir du “Pharon” Taousert en Jordanie”, \textit{VT} 12 (1962): 464–69. For the destruction of the sanctuary see esp. Franken, “The Excavations at Deir \textquotesingle Allā in Jordan: 3rd Season”, 381.

\textsuperscript{29} Franken, “Excavations at Deir \textquotesingle Allā, Season 1964: Preliminary Report”, 418.

The nature of the LBA sanctuary remains uncertain. Franken has argued on the basis of the mixed ceramic repertoire—which included Mycenaean, Egyptian and Edomite as well as locally produced wares—that the settlement and the sanctuary may have been integrally connected to a regional Gileadite trade network (cf. Gen 37:25).\footnote{Cf. Franken, \textit{Excavations at Tell Deir 'Alla: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary}, esp. 163–79, with references; cf. Eveline J. van der Steen, \textit{Tribes and Territories in Transition} (PhD diss.; Leiden University, 2002), esp. 97, who also argued for a trade centre, but one related to a trade route that ran from Amman, via Deir 'Alla north to Pella and Beth Shean, and from there to Egypt; cf. the discussion in Franken, “Deir 'Alla and its Religion”, 42–43. According to Franken, as much as 25% of the pottery from this period was not produced in the central Jordan valley; cf. Franken, \textit{Excavations at Tell Deir 'Alla: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary}, 113.} The scale of the construction work—as represented by the artificial extension of the mound—suggests a coordinated workforce. Therefore, if the numerous objects of Egyptian provenance and the cartouche of Taousert may be taken as evidence of direct contact with Egypt, then it is reasonable to suppose that the construction of the sanctuary took place under the auspices of the Egyptian empire during the 18\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty.\footnote{Cf. Franken, \textit{Excavations at Tell Deir 'Alla: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary}, 166. Note also the large number of “gifts” of Egyptian origin that were found in the cela of the sanctuary, cf. Franken, “Deir 'Alla and its Religion”, 38. Cf. Ora Negbi, “Were there Sea Peoples in the Central Jordan Valley at the Transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age?”, \textit{TA} 18 (1991): 214, who argues that the LBA Deir 'Alla sanctuary may be compared with the Canaanite Fosse Temples of Lachish, Levels VII-VI at Beth-shan and the Acropolis Temple at Lachish, which display strong Egyptian architectural affinities.} This possibility has also been endorsed by van der Steen, who cited the contemporaneous Egyptian stronghold at nearby Tell es-Sa'idiyeh as indication of Egyptian control over the Deir 'Alla market region.\footnote{van der Steen, \textit{Tribes and Territories in Transition} (Phd diss. Leiden University, 2002), 97.}
Accordingly, Franken interpreted the numerous foreign objects (including alabaster vessels, faience, glass, seals and amulets) found in the sanctuary as “gifts” offered to ensure “heavenly protection” of the trade enterprises. More recently, Niels Groot has proposed a similar interpretation; although he emphasised the political dimension, explaining the presence of the many Transjordanian and Egyptian/Egyptianising objects as partly the result of a practice of regional gift giving, which included the offering of prestigious votive gifts to the local sanctuary.

7.3.4. Early Iron Age (IRON I–IIA)

The transition from the LBA to the early Iron Age (Iron IA) seems to have been marked throughout the Southern Levant by a period of decentralisation, which was characterised by population movements away from city-states. This pattern seems to be reflected in the Central Jordan valley generally and at Deir ‘Alla specifically. After the destruction of the LBA sanctuary there followed a period of semi-permanent occupation on the tell (Phases A–D). There are few architectural remains associated with this period and it seems that the population at that time consisted of semi-nomadic pastoralists, living in tents during the relatively clement winter and spring months. A number of flint sickle-blades dating from this period also suggest agricultural activities. Excavations also revealed several furnaces (associated with Phase B) on the summit of the tell. Initially Franken interpreted these as evidence of bronze smelting and

35 Groot, “All the Work of Artisans”, 68.
37 There are a number of small post holes dating from this Phase, which may have been associated with tent poles; cf. Franken, Excavations at Tell Deir ‘Allā I, 21.
casting; however Eveline van der Steen has recently challenged the suitability of the furnaces for this purpose.\(^3^9\) At present, the purpose of the early Iron IA furnaces is unknown (on the significance of metal working for the identification of the site, see §7.5).

At some stage between Phases D–E tell Deir ʿAlla was apparently resettled by a different group. This resettlement is indicated by a change in the ceramic repertoire (reflecting forms found further to the east) and an increase in the number of lightly constructed mud-brick structures; although there were no indications of violent occupation or a period of abandonment.\(^4^0\) Signs of more substantial buildings also begin to appear in this period (esp. Phases E–H) and Phase K showed signs of a round mud-brick tower, ca. 7m in diameter. Traces of occasional rebuilding and repair work (e.g. the raising of floor and roof levels) indicated a prolonged period of occupation.\(^4^1\) This second period (Phases E–L) has been dated to the eleventh and tenth centuries B.C.E. on the basis of \(^{14}\)C analysis of charcoal associated with Phase J.\(^4^2\)

With the commencement of the joint Jordanian-Dutch project in 1976, it became apparent that a new and more precise system of stratigraphic classification was required. Hence, the project adopted a

\(^{3^9}\) van der Steen, *Tribes and Territories in Transition* (Phd diss. Leiden University, 2002), 45; cf. Franken, *Excavations at Tell Deir ʿAllā I*, 20–21; van der Kooij, “Deir ʿAlla, Tell”, 340. Van der Steen’s objections were based on both typological comparison with known copper smelting furnaces and the notable absence of large quantities of ore or slag connected to metal-work (pp.162–63).

\(^{4^0}\) Franken, *Excavations at Tell Deir ʿAllā I*, 22–22. According to van der Steen, the resettlement in this period may be related to the economic collapse of the Amman Plateau, and the subsequent population influx of the Central Jordan Valley; cf. van der Steen, *Tribes and Territories in Transition* (Phd diss. Leiden University, 2002), 220.


numerical system to replace the earlier alphabetic system.\textsuperscript{43} It is not currently clear whether Phase L may be directly identified with Phase X of the new system, which is represented in a small area on the top of the tell.\textsuperscript{44} There are indications that Phase X ended abruptly. In one storeroom a number of storage jars were found, which were evidently still full of liquid at the time they were abandoned.\textsuperscript{45} This Phase seems to have been followed by a long occupational gap.\textsuperscript{46} A large pit (12m x 5m) on the summit of the tell was apparently dug sometime after the end of this phase and the beginning of the next.\textsuperscript{47}

7.3.5. \textit{Mid-Iron Age} (IRON IIB)

\textit{Phase IX}

It was in this stratum that the DAPT was discovered. Phase IX has been extensively excavated on the north-eastern summit of the tell (area B, fig. 7.1).\textsuperscript{48} Surveys and limited excavations elsewhere on the tell suggest that

\textsuperscript{43} The new system employs Roman numerals, with I representing the highest stratum (closest to the surface). Unfortunately the two systems are not fully integrated and it is necessary to designate strata by either the numerical or alphabetic system depending on the phase in question. From the Iron Age II period onward (Phase X) the numerical system is used. According to van der Kooij (personal communication), this system will be further subdivided and standardised in forthcoming final reports.

\textsuperscript{44} Cf. van der Kooij, “Deir 'Alla, Tell”, 340.

\textsuperscript{45} The fullest description of these jars occurs in van der Kooij and Ibrahim, \textit{Picking Up the Threads}, 82. There is some uncertainty as to the precise number of vessels: in one place van der Kooij referred to twelve store-jars (“Deir 'Alla, Tell”, 340) and in another to thirteen (“The Vicissitudes of Life at Dayr 'Allā during the First Millennium BC, Seen in a Wider Context", \textit{SHAJ VII} (2001): 295), and in yet another he referred to twelve of a group of fourteen jars filled with liquid (\textit{Picking Up the Threads}, 86).

\textsuperscript{46} Franken, \textit{Excavations at Tell Deir 'Allā I}, 61.

\textsuperscript{47} van der Kooij, “The Vicissitudes of Life at Dayr 'Allā”, 295.

\textsuperscript{48} van der Kooij has informed me (personal communication) that in subsequent excavations the excavated area was extended to the south and generally seems to reflect a continuation of the architectural features in Area B; although, less densely than in the northern squares.
the Phase IX village was restricted to the eastern summit. On the basis of the excavated remains Kaptijn has estimated a total population of approximately 305 to 329 people. The relatively long and straight walls of this phase indicated that the complex was probably planned and constructed in a single stage, rather than growing though a process of agglutination. This suggests a relatively swift and deliberate process of resettlement. However, the delineation of spaces within the complex is complicated by the fact that thresholds between rooms were high and made of mud-bricks, while wall foundations were relatively insubstantial and often difficult to trace. Nevertheless, a complex of about 40 rooms and open spaces has been identified. In general the architecture is relatively flimsy; but at least one room seems to have been lavishly furnished, including a wooden object with bone inlay panels.  

\[14^\text{C} \text{ analysis of a charred grain sample from Phase IX yielded a calibrated date of ca. 800 B.C.E. (± 50 years), which seems to be supported by the ceramic evidence.}\]  

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50 Cf. ibid, 270–71.
52 Cf. Franken, Excavations at Tell Deir ʿAlla: The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary, 10–12; van der Kooij and Ibrahim, Picking Up the Threads, 86; Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, 18.
53 Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, 23, with references.
54 The analysis is reported in J. C. Vogel and H. T. Waterbolk, “Groningen Radiocarbon Dates X”, Radiocarbon 14 (1972): 53. The results are discussed in Hofstijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 16; van der Kooij and Ibrahim, Picking Up the Threads, 88; van der Kooij, “Deir ʿAlla, Tell”, 340–41. Note, however, that this date is based on a single sample only.
Notwithstanding the DAPT, there is little to suggest an unusually cultic character for the settlement; although reference should be made to several special objects including a “chalice” and a large conical “weight” in rooms BB421 and BB418. Reference should also be made to several anthropomorphic female figurines not dissimilar to the terracotta figurines found throughout Palestine during the Iron Age. The function of these remains a mystery, but they may well have been associated with household or folk religion.

One remarkable feature of this phase is the extraordinarily large number of loom-weights found throughout the complex. Of particular interest are fifteen groups of loom-weights, which might reflect looms associated with individual households. In two instances (the room in the north-eastern corner of grid ref. A-6 and the room in grid ref. A-7) the weights lay in a configuration that suggested they might have fallen from an active loom. This profusion of loom-weights has been interpreted by some as evidence that weaving played a special part in the cultic activities of the tell. However, Ibrahim and van der Kooij have argued that the fact

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55 These were found together with the inscribed stone and vessel (§5.2.2).
58 According to the calculations of Jeannette Boertien, Deir ‘Alla has yielded three times as many loom-weights as other Iron Age sites in the Levant; Jeannette H. Boertien, “Unravelling the Fabric: Textile Production in Iron Age Transjordan” (Ph.D. diss., Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit, 2013), 147.
60 Cf. most extensively Boertien, “Unravelling the Threads”, 135–51. Boertien, drew particular attention to the preservation of a piece of fabric woven from hemp, which, is unique in an ancient Near Eastern context. Boertien’s study is particularly interesting in the present context due to her comparison with Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (cf. Ackerman, “Asherah, the West Semitic Goddess of Spinning and Weaving?”, 1–30). However, its value is
that at a random moment (i.e. the time of the destruction of Phase IX) only one or two of the looms were in use, indicates that weaving was limited to occasional needs, or that it was seasonally conditioned.\(^61\) That being said, Jeannette Boertien has recently argued that the number of loom-weights in the respective groups suggests that in Deir ‘Alla households had more than one loom. This far exceeds the requirements of individual households, and might indicate that textile production was an important economic factor in the community.\(^62\)

In addition to these groups of loom-weights the excavators unearthed fifteen groups of assorted pottery, including storage jars and vessels for the preparation and consumption of food.\(^63\) Accordingly, Ibrahim and van der Kooij, suggested that these two groups of finds could be interpreted as possible evidence of individual households.\(^64\) Nevertheless, the apparent concentration of cooking facilities in grid ref. D-6 may suggest that food preparation and cooking were communal activities (see below).\(^65\)

The pottery assemblage of Phase IX generally represents a continuation of Phase L/X types; although, with a number of locally produced imitations of forms from west of the Jordan.\(^66\) There is also some


\(^64\) Ibid, 18–19.

\(^65\) Ibid, 18–19.

evidence of possible trade connections with the Phoenician coast.\textsuperscript{67} Hence, it seems that in the first half of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, the commercial orientation of Deir ʿAlla was primarily to the west, rather than north or east. Nevertheless, there is evidence for northern (Aramean) influence in the weaving technology and stone artefacts.\textsuperscript{68} This can most plausibly be attributed to the Aramean hegemony of the late 9\textsuperscript{th} century. But it does not necessarily follow that the inhabitants of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX were ethnically or culturally Aramean; rather the picture that emerges is of a local settlement, integrated first and foremost into the regional valley network, and, in a wider context, (perhaps indirectly) into the economic zone to the west (see further below).

The destruction of Phase IX seems to have progressed in at least three stages: first, the tell was struck by an initial earth tremor. Following this initial tremor, a fire burned away the wooden looms and other perishable materials, leaving only charred remains.\textsuperscript{69} It is possible that much of the missing plaster between Combinations I and II fell from the wall and was destroyed by this fire.\textsuperscript{70} Finally, there came a second shock. It was this second shock that caused the collapse of the structure to which the plaster was attached (see §7.6.1).\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{67} This comes in the form of a pair of juglets typologically related to that region, which were filled with herbs and fruit seeds, which may represent trade goods; see Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, 26.


\textsuperscript{69} Cf. Hofstijzzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 12.

\textsuperscript{70} Cf. ibid, 9–10.

\textsuperscript{71} Cf. ibid, 8, 10.
Fig. 7.2—Top plan of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX
**Phase VIII**

Shortly after the destruction of Phase IX a large building was constructed near the area of the bench room (grid ref. C-7). According to van der Kooij this structure was hardly used and was abruptly abandoned.\(^{72}\)

**Phase VII**

Sometime around ca. 700 B.C.E. a new village was erected on top of the levelled Phase IX and VIII remains.\(^{73}\) The material remains of this phase differ from preceding phases, suggesting greater influence from the east. The most notable changes include the presence of ‘Neo-Assyrian’ pottery and a seal bearing the name of the Ammonite deity Milkom, which might be indicative of greater connection with the Ammonite cultural sphere.\(^{74}\) The Phase VII settlement was destroyed abruptly, apparently by an earthquake and concomitant fire, and it seems that there were no immediate attempts to rebuild.

**Phase VI**

During the mid-7\(^{th}\) century a new walled settlement was established on the summit of the tell. The remains of this phase show clear signs of Ammonite affiliation, both in terms of ceramic typology and the palaeography and onamasticon of several inscribed seals and an ostracon.\(^{75}\) This phase was destroyed by fire and abandoned.\(^{76}\)

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\(^{74}\) Cf. Groot, “All the Work of Artisans”, 95.

\(^{75}\) Groot, “All the Work of Artisans”, 96.

\(^{76}\) van der Kooij, “The Vicissitudes of Life at Dayr ʿAllā”, 297.
Phase VI/V

This stratum was not initially recognised as a separate phase. But, in light of the fact that the architectural remains recovered from this level cannot be directly related to either the preceding or subsequent phases, they have been provisionally labelled Phase VI/V in the preliminary reports. The limited remains from these phases included facilities for the storage of fodder, and Groot has interpreted this phase as a hamlet or farmstead.

7.3.6. The Persian Period

Phase V

At the beginning of the fifth century a new settlement was constructed on top of the tell. This phase seems to have existed for some time before its gradual abandonment. The discovery of an Aramaic ostracon recording instructions for the restoration of a gate, seems to suggest that during this period Deir ‘Alla was part of a regional administrative network. According to Groot, the ceramic assemblage from phase V reflects a general continuation of a Central Transjordanian ceramic tradition.

80 Groot, All the Work of Artisans, 97; van der Kooij and M. Ibrahim, Picking Up the Threads, 70.
Phases IV–II

Little remains from these periods, but there are signs of human occupation on the tell. According to Groot, Phase II might still be dated to the Persian period, but this cannot be proved. 82

7.3.7. Mamluk–Ottoman Period

The Persian period seems to have been followed by a long occupation gap at Deir ʿAlla. In the Mamluk and Ottoman periods the tell was used as a local cemetery. 83

7.4. DEIR ʿALLA PHASE IX IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Biblical sources allude to an early Israelite presence in Gilead in the vicinity of tell Deir ʿAlla. 84 Certainly, the Mesha Stele confirms that by the mid-9th century the Israelite kingdom had expanded into Transjordan, east of the Dead Sea to the south, and it is reasonable to suppose that Gilead was controlled by the Omrides at this time. 85 By the late-9th century, however, it seems that northern Transjordan had come under Aramean control (cf. 2 Kgs 10:32–33; Amos 1:3–4). 86 This probably occurred

82 Groot, “All the Work of Artisans”, 29.
83 Franken and Kalsbeek, Potters of a Medieval Village in the Jordan Valley; cf. Petit, Settlement Dynamics in the Middle Jordan Valley, 29.
85 Cf. Finkelstein, The Forgotten Kingdom, 84.
shortly after the accession of Hazael as king of Aram-Damascus ca. 842 B.C.E.\(^{87}\) Then, following the collapse of the Aramean empire at the end of the 9\(^{th}\) century, there appears to have been a short period of Israelite resurgence under King Joash and his son Jeroboam II (cf. §4.7). During the reign of Jeroboam II (ca.788–747) this seems to have included a period of territorial expansion (cf. 2 Kgs 13:25; 14:25). Biblical evidence suggests that this expansion included the region of Gilead (cf. 2 Kings 15:25, 29; Hos 5:1–2; 6:7–8). In 732 B.C.E. Gilead came under the control of the Neo-Asyrian Empire.\(^{88}\) However, two summary inscriptions of Tiglat-pileser III seem to suggest that at this time Gilead was once again under the control of Rezin of Damascus, suggesting that the region was reconquered by the Arameans in the intervening period of instability following the death of Jeroboam and before the Neo-Assyrian conquest.\(^{89}\)

So when in this period of shifting influences should Deir ’Alla Phase IX be identified? Al Wolters attempted to identify Phase IX with a community of deportees from northern-Syria brought to the area as part of the Neo-Assyrian policy of deportation and resettlement.\(^{90}\) The basis for this argument lay primarily in the palaeographic dating of the DAPT to the end of the 8\(^{th}\) century (ca. 700 B.C.E.). This rests in turn on the contention that the script stands at the beginning of the Ammonite national script series (cf. §6.6), which flourished between the 7\(^{th}\)–6\(^{th}\) centuries.\(^{91}\)

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However, as was discussed in the preceding chapter, this interpretation of the script is not universally accepted, and strong arguments have been advanced for dating the script earlier, to the first three quarters of the 8th century B.C.E. This is further supported by the $^{14}$C evidence, which places Deir 'Alla Phase IX between the mid-9th and mid-8th centuries B.C.E. (see above).

As such, if, with all due reserve, the destruction of the site is attributed to the earthquake alluded to in Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5 (ca.760 B.C.E.), then the latter years of Deir 'Alla Phase IX might be tentatively attributed to the period of Israelite dominance under Jeroboam II (making the DAPT almost precisely contemporary with the KAPT). This agrees well with the evidence for commercial contacts with the eastern Mediterranean coast (see above). However, the evidence for periodical rebuilding suggests that Phase IX might have lasted some time, and it is possible that the origins of the Phase IX settlement should be sought in the period of Aramean hegemony at the end of the 9th century. It is perhaps to the influence of this period that the Aramaic flavour of the Deir 'Alla dialect and elements of material culture should be attributed. Moreover, as Na’aman has observed, the official stone weight and jar measure inscribed in the Aramaic script and language might be understood as testament to the enduring Aramean influence in the region. Consequently, Deir ‘Alla Phase IX might have been (re)founded in the Aramean period during the late 9th century, but its destruction should probably be attributed to the Israelite period in the first half of the 8th century. In other words, Deir ‘Alla Phase IX might be characterised as a

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Macdonal, Russell Adams and Piotr Bienkowsk; Levantine Archaeology 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 335–38.


94 On the evidence for rebuilding cf. ibid, 17.

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local settlement that came under Aramean and then Israelite influence successively.

That is not necessarily to say, however, that Deir 'Alla was an Israelite site, or that the DAPT is an Israelite inscription. There is no evidence for disruption in the settlement pattern during this occupational phase, suggesting basic continuity in the local occupancy. But the possibility that Deir 'Alla interacted with the Israelite cultural sphere comports well with the fact that traditions about the seer Balaam, son of Beor, were known on both sides of the Jordan. This should be contrasted with the situation in the subsequent phases, when the geo-political orientation of the site seems to have shifted to the Ammonites in the east.

7.5. IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE

Several attempts have been made to identify Tell Deir 'Alla with biblical toponyms in the western Transjordan. Among the most persuasive and enduring of these is the suggestion that the tell should be identified as biblical Succoth (cf. Gen 33:17; Josh 13:27; Judg 8:4–17; 1 Kgs 7:46 = 2 Chron 4:17; compare עמק סכות, “the valley of Succoth”, Ps 60:6 [Heb. 60:8]; 108:7 [Heb. 108:8]). The equation of Deir 'Alla with Succoth is first and foremost etymological. In the Talmud (J.Šeb 9:2) the contemporary name for Succoth is given as הרעשנה. It was apparently Selah Merrill who was first to identify this toponym with Deir 'Alla, and prior to the Dutch excavations in the 1960s this identification seemed probable:

96 Certainly, the allusion to Balaam in Michah 6:5 attests the existence of Israelite traditions by the end of the 7th century.
97 Bearing in mind that this would not necessarily reflect the local name for the Tell; cf. Franken, “Deir ‘Alla Re-Visited”, 13–14. It would, however, provide a functional identification to facilitate a search for ancillary details in the biblical narratives pertaining to the nature of the site and its inhabitants.
99 Merrill, East of the Jordan, 386–88.
(1) the topographical situation of Deir ’Alla matches the general descriptions of Succoth in the Hebrew Bible; (2) surface surveys had revealed pottery from the Bronze and Iron Ages (see above; cf. Gen 33:17; 1 Kgs 7:46 = 2 Chron 4:17); (3) the discovery of slag on the surface of the Tell is consistent with the biblical description of the casting of bronze implements for the Jerusalem Temple in the region (cf. 1 Kgs 7:46 = 2 Chron 4:17). However, Franken has subsequently challenged the identification of Deir ’Alla as Succoth on two counts: (1) alluvial deposits on the northern side of the Tell suggest that the modern course of the Jabbok River has shifted from ancient times and that Deir ’Alla was originally located on the southern bank of the river; the wrong side for it to be identified with Succoth in the territory of Gad (Josh 13:24–28; cf. Deut 16:3); and (2) according to the biblical description, the evidence of metal working is consistent with the entire industrial zone between Succoth and Zarethan, and not with Succoth alone. Notwithstanding

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101 Regardless of the historicity of the tribal allotments in Josh 13, it seems probable that this account reflects an historical situation at some stage in the history of the northern tribes. However, on the mention of Gad in the Mesha Stele and the general difficulty in delineating the territorial boundaries throughout this period, cf. Finkelstein, The Forgotten Kingdom, 110.

102 Franken, “The Excavations at Deir ’Allā in Jordan”, 389; cf. idem, Excavations at Tell Deir ’Allā I, 5–6. Franken overstated the case for the latter point when he wrote “[t]he presence of a metal industry during the Iron I period…tends rather to weaken than to strengthen the equation Deir ’Allā = Succoth” (p.5). The description of the metal working sites as being בין סוכות ובין צרתן, “between Succoth and Zarethan”, does not necessarily imply that these sites were excluded from the copper-work production as Franken apparently supposed. Furthermore, even if that were the case, the fact remains that on the
these objections, Franken’s counter-proposal that the site might tentatively be identified as Gilgal—which according to 1 Samuel 11:15 was probably the site of a major early Iron Age shrine—has fared no better. No evidence of an Iron Age shrine corresponding to that of the LBA has yet surfaced. 103

A popular alternative is Penuel (cf. Peniel, Gen 32:30 [Heb. 30:31]).104 According to Judges 8:4–17, Penuel was located to the east of Succoth, and on the basis of Genesis 32:22, 23 (Heb.23, 24) it was close to

basis of these verses alone we would expect evidence of metalwork throughout this region. On the evidence for metal working and the identity of the artisans, see conveniently Negbi, “Were there Sea Peoples in the Central Jordan Valley”, 216–19. Franken had initially argued that, contrary to Glueck’s survey, no Middle Bronze remains had been unearthed from the Tell, but this no longer appears to be the case; see Franken, Excavations at Tell Deir ʿAllā I, 6; cf. van der Kooij, “Deir ʿAlla, Tell” , 339.

103 Franken, Excavations at Tell Deir ʿAllā I, 7. This proposal was not repeated in Franken’s subsequent discussions of the identity of the site, cf. cf. Franken, “Deir ʿAlla Re-Visited” , 14. However, van der Kooij, “Deir ʿAlla, Tell”, 338–42; although, van der Kooij (among others) has argued that the religious significance of the site must have continued, as is testified by the epigraphic remains and the site’s modern name (see below).

104 Cf. Gerrit van der Kooij, “Deir ʿAlla”, Le Mond de la Bible 46 (1986): 34–35; André Lemaire, “Galaad et Makir: Remarques sur la Tribu de Manassé à l’est du Jourdain”, VT 31 (1981): 39–61; J. Briend, “Regards sur le Jourdain et sa Vallée”, Le Mond de la Bible 65 (1990): 18; MacDonald, “East of the Jordan”, 148–49; Lipiński, On the Skirts of Canaan, 290–92; cf. Finkelstein, Koch and Lipschits, “The Biblical Gilead”, 148–49, who discuss the possibility that Deir ʿAlla is to be identified as biblical Penuel, but prefer Tell edh-Dhahab esh-Sharqi, on the grounds that (1) today Deir ʿAlla is not situated immediately on the Jabbok river; (2) the reference to the fortified tower of Penuel (Judg 8:4–17) fits the remains at Tell edh-Dhahab esh-Sharqi, which seems to have signs of a monumental building on its sumit; and (3) Penuel is not mentioned in any text speaking explicitly about the Jordan valley (e.g. Josh 13:27). In response to this it should be noted that: (1) the course of the river appears to have shifted since the Iron Age (see above); and (2) remains of a tower have been identified in Phase K, the memory of which might have informed the tradition reflected in Judges 8. Even so, the caution of these authors should be noted.
the ford of the Jabbok River.\textsuperscript{105} The Talmudic equation of Succoth and הָרֹעֶלֵה (= Deir ʿAlla) is not necessarily a problem for this interpretation. First, given that the tell was not continuously occupied between the Persian and rabbinic periods, \textit{J.Šeb} 9:2 may simply reflect a later approximation of two toponyms known to have been located in the same region.\textsuperscript{106} Second, Lipiński has suggested that the name הָרֹעֶלֵה is derived from the Aramaic phrase תֵרֹעֶלֵה > תֵרֹעֶלֵה, “the gate of God” (cf. Jacob’s description of Bethel as שַעַרְּשֵׁם שָמַיִם, “the gate of the heavens” in Gen 28:18), with assimilation of the ʾālep to the ʿayin.\textsuperscript{107} Consequently, according to Lipiński, הָרֹעֶלֵה, “the gate of God”, might be interpreted as a theologising interpretation of Penuel (lit. “the face of God”).\textsuperscript{108} Regardless of whether the equation of Penuel and הָרֹעֶלֵה is correct, the linguistic argument is valid, and suggests that the site of הָרֹעֶלֵה (Deir ʿAlla) was considered especially sacred.\textsuperscript{109}

Consequently, while it may not be possible to ascribe a biblical toponym to the tell, there is suggestive ancient evidence linking the region


\textsuperscript{106} Cf. Lipiński, \textit{On the Skirts of Canaan}, 290; cf. Albright, “The Jordan Valley in the Bronze Age”, 45–46. It should be noted that, following an occupational hiatus in the 5th–4th centuries B.C.E., there were a number of large Roman farmsteads in the vicinity and from then on the valley was continuously occupied until the 16th century C.E.; cf. Franken, “Deir ʿAlla Re-Visited”, 14.

\textsuperscript{107} Lipiński, \textit{On the Skirts of Canaan}, 290.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 290.

\textsuperscript{109} This would place the toponym הָרֹעֶלֵה on a continuum with the LBA sanctuary. Note that the Arabic name (“high sacred building”) must be ancient since no corresponding building is known from Arabic times. This would seem to be supported by the local tradition that Deir ʿAlla was once the site of a city, as was reported by Merrill (see above).
to theophany. Whatever its identity, the location of Deir ʿAlla, with its detailed description of a divine visitation (i.e. the DAPT), in the valley of Succoth, in the vicinity of a place named “the face of God”, invites supposition about the existence of folk-traditions concerning past epiphanies. Would it be reasonable, then, to suspect that the vicinity of Deir ʿAlla was believed to have a special proximity to the divine? Like Kuntillet ʿAjrud, was it perhaps a location where divine encounters could be expected to befall, or to be induced? 110

7.6. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DAPT

As with Kuntillet ʿAjrud, discussion of the DAPT will be framed in terms of the four radiating spheres of interaction: the writing surface; the room; the building complex; and the total excavated area.

7.6.1. The Writing surface

As noted in Chapter 3, analysis of the writing surface involves two aspects: (1) the technologies and techniques involved in preparing and inscribing the writing surface; (2) the physical arrangement of the text.

Beginning with the technical discussion, it may be observed that the lime-based plaster that serves as the writing surface was tempered with organic material and applied ca. 7mm thick over a thin layer of wet clay. 111 The tempering material has entirely degraded, but impressions left in the plaster suggest that it probably consisted of fine chaff, predominantly flax and straw, with possible traces of seeds in some fragments. These impressions led van der Kooij to suggest that the organic temper might...

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110 Shea’s suggestion that Deir ʿAlla might be identified as biblical Pethor (Num 22:5) can probably be dismissed, as it rests on a number of questionable historical and epigraphic assumptions (cf. §5.2.1); cf. Shea, “The Inscribed Tablets from Tell Deir ʿAlla: Part II”, passim.

111 The composition of the plaster has been studied in detail by van der Kooij, cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla, 23–26.
have been sourced from the dung of herbivorous animals.\textsuperscript{112} Once dry, the plaster was polished to create a smooth surface.\textsuperscript{113} Evidence of comparable plaster surfaces (also averaging ca.7mm thick) was discovered in five other loci associated with Phase IX; however, in each instance the plaster fragments were detached from the wall, lying amongst debris covering the floor.\textsuperscript{114} It appears that the plaster was only used as a writing surface in this one instance, further testifying to the unique nature of the room. In comparative terms, van der Kooij has concluded that the Deir ḤAlla plaster is closer in composition to Western Asiatic plasters rather than Egyptian plasters, which are generally thinner, ca. 1.5–3mm thick, with fewer inclusions (cf. §4.9.1).\textsuperscript{115}

As at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, chemical analysis of the inks has revealed that the red pigment was derived from a red iron oxide (Fe\textsubscript{2}O\textsubscript{3}), while the carbon-based black ink was probably sourced from lamp-soot or charcoal.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[112] Ibid, 23. Note that considerable quantities of dung, mostly in the form of cakes apparently used for fuel, were found in the Phase IX remains, cf. van der Kooij and Ibrahim, \textit{Picking Up the Threads}, 30, 83, 84.
\item[113] van der Kooij has noted several polished stones in the south-eastern rooms that may have been used for this purpose; cf. van der Kooij and Ibrahim, \textit{Picking Up the Threads}, 84
\item[114] Cf. Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “Excavations at Deir ḤAlla, Season 1984”, 137.
\item[116] Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ḤAlla}, 21.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The writing surface was divided into at least two columns by means of horizontal and vertical borders drawn in red ink. This division was evidently undertaken prior to inscription, as in a number of places the black ink of the text covers the red of the border. The horizontal border lines were apparently fashioned by dipping string in the red pigment, which was then laid against the surface of the plaster to create a straight line. The vertical lines were drawn by a brush with short stiff bristles, which, in several places, have left small scratch marks in the surface of the plaster.

Van der Kooij, who is a leading expert on the characteristics and handling of ink-based writing implements in the Iron Age, has suggested that this implement might have simply been a small reed or stick with the fibres separated at one end, similar to implements known from Egypt.

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117 For the tools and processes used to draw these lines, cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla*, 24–25.
119 Cf. ibid, 24–25. This same technique is also attested in Egypt.
120 Cf. ibid, 24.
121 Cf. ibid, 24, for a discussion of writing implements, see pp.32–57; cf. van der Kooij, “Early North-West Semitic Script Traditions”. For a more general discussion of the
According to van der Kooij, the writing implement used for the text itself was probably something like a brush or pen fashioned from a rush, with stiff flexible fibres cut to form an angled nib. The skill involved in the preparation and care of this implement—and, for that matter, the preparation of the inks—indicates a high level of expertise on the part of the scribe. Once again, such implements are known from Egypt; although, as van der Kooij has observed, there is considerable evidence for the widespread use of similar implements throughout Syria and Mesopotamia by the 8th century B.C.E.122

The original layout of the plastered surface(s) can be reconstructed, to an extent, from the distribution of the fallen fragments. The fragments of Combination II (group ii) were discovered in a cluster just outside the north-eastern corner of room EE334. The distribution and comparatively large size of these fragments suggests that they had fallen a short distance from the west and, hence, were probably situated relatively low in relation to wall B/C5.36 in the north-western corner of room EE335 (see fig.7.3).123

The fragments of Combination I (group i), together with fragment xiv with the drawing of a sphinx, were found in the upper levels of a collapsed layer of unburnt rubble in and around a shallow depression in the floor of room EE334.124 The distance of these fragments from the base of

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122 Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla*, 33. In particular van der Kooij cites the depiction of such pens on the Zincirli stele, and the numerous depictions of Neo-Assyrian scribes using pens for ink based writing alongside scribes using a stylus to inscribe clay.


124 The nature of this pit is discussed in Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, , 20. Ibrahim and van der Kooij commented that it is possible that
the four walls suggests that they had fallen further and were probably situated higher than those of group ii. A number of fragments were also scattered between these two groups, suggesting the plaster had fallen from the north-west. The intervening fragments included some uninscribed fragments and fragments of group viii, preserving sections of text bordered on the left-hand side by a vertical margin line.\textsuperscript{125}

The nature of the structure to which the plaster writing surface was attached has been a matter of debate.\textsuperscript{126} Initially, van der Kooij suggested that the distribution pattern might suggest that the text was written on eastern and southern faces respectively of a massive mud-brick structure, perhaps a doorway or mud-brick stele of some kind.\textsuperscript{127} However, no traces of such structures have been found. Moreover, comparative evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud and the uninscribed plaster surfaces found elsewhere at Deir ʿAlla suggests that the plaster may have been applied directly to the wall surface.\textsuperscript{128} If that is the case, however, then it is necessary to demonstrate that the location of group i, to the south-west of group ii, can be explained by the nature of the collapse of the wall. As it happens, subsequent excavations in the surrounding area have revealed that several of the walls of Phase IX had fallen with a twist to the west or south-west.\textsuperscript{129} This uniformity is consistent with the directional shock of a severe

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 26.


\textsuperscript{127} Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 25–28.

\textsuperscript{128} The comparative evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud has been discussed by several commentators; cf. McCarter, “The Balaam Texts from Deir ʿAlla”, 49; Lemaire, “La disposition originelle des inscriptions sur plâtre de Deir ʿAlla”, 81; van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 240, and n.2.

\textsuperscript{129} Cf. van der Kooij and Ibrahim, \textit{Picking Up the Threads}, 83; van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 239–40. The fact that fragments i(a) and pieces of i(b) and i(c) were
earthquake. Even so, the possibility of a doorway or opening between rooms EE335 and EE334 cannot be discounted (see further below).

The question of how the fragments were arranged in relation to one another is of equal importance to the question of the structure to which they were attached. Here, too, it is not possible to arrive at a definitive reconstruction, but several empirical observations may be weighed in consideration. The original disposition of the fragments has been the subject of detailed studies by van der Kooij and Lemaire, and much of what follows effectively amounts to a synthesis and response to their observations.

(1) As has already been observed, the relative height of the fragments can be deduced from the position of groups i and ii in relation to the base of wall B/C5.36. The impression that group ii was found relatively higher in the rubble might suggest that the wall collapsed upon itself rather than toppling in a single piece; although, if we assume a high ceiling (> 2.5m), it may be that the collapsing wall struck the opposing wall in room EE334 before breaking in its middle.

The likelihood that Phase IX had been destroyed by a succession of earth-shocks had already been discussed by Franken in Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla, 7–8, on the basis of cracks running through the stratigraphy. For a contemporary and apparently similar destruction pattern at Tell es-Safi in the Judean Shephelah, which has also been attributed to earthquake damage, see Aren M. Maier, “Philistia and the Judean Shephelah after Hazael: the Power Play between the Philistines, Judeans and Assyrians in the 8th Century BCE in light of the Excavations at Tell es-Safi/Gath”, in: Disaster and Relief Management in Ancient Israel, Egypt and the Ancient Near East (ed. Angelika Berlejung; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012): 245–46.


Owing to the urgency with which the excavators were obliged to collect and record the plaster fragments in 1967 it was not possible to study the remains of wall B/C5.36 in as much detail as might have been hoped. Nevertheless, on the basis of the available data, the dotted lines depicted in the published top plans (see fig.7.2) seem to be reasonably assured (Gerrit van der Kooij, personal communication).
originally located near the base of the wall is further supported by a slight rotation in the writing angle, suggesting a change in the posture of the scribe.\(^{133}\) Furthermore, according to van der Kooij, the type of surface damage at the lowest part of fragments ii(f) and ii(g), may also be consistent with this edge having been close to a floor.\(^{134}\) This has a bearing on the number of columns of text.

(2) The possibility that there may have originally been two or more columns of text was first proposed by van der Kooij in response to the fact that group i was located some distance to the south-west of group ii, suggesting that it may have come from a point to the left of Combination II; however, as noted above, this distribution might plausibly be explained by a twisting south-west collapse of the wall.\(^{135}\)

(3) The plaster at the right-hand extremity of Combination II is angled backward, suggesting that it was probably attached to a vertical edge of some kind, perhaps a doorway. This backward angle indicates the northernmost limit of the plaster surface. Note that the right-hand margin between the edge of the plaster and the text is a few centimetres wider at the base of fragment ii(g), suggesting a slight bulge in the base of the wall.


\(^{134}\) Ibid, 25.

\(^{135}\) For the initial discussion, see Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir 'Alla*, 25–26. Lemaire, who published his study before the evidence of the earthquake damage had been unearthed, understood this as one of the key indications that there were originally two columns of text, arguing that the structural corner at the junction of wall B/C5.36 and east-west wall 42 (i.e. north-eastern corner of room EE334), would have provided support to wall B/C5.36, preventing it from toppling in a southerly direction; Lemaire, “La disposition originelle des inscriptions sur plâtre de Deir ‘Alla”, 86. However, in response, van der Kooij has observed (a) that the wall foundations in this corner are almost entirely obliterated, but, hypothetically, a south-west collapse might be explained by a doorway in wall 42, weakening that corner; (b) the pattern of earthquake damage would conceivably make a south-west collapse of both interconnected walls possible; cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Allā”, 244, n.5.
As van der Kooij has argued, the fact that the lowest reaches of the plaster were only found at the northern end of the east face of wall B/C5.36, probably indicates the southern limit of the plastered area. In other words, the absence of plaster to the south of group ii, means it is unlikely that there was a column to the left of Combination II. However, this observation must be qualified, as van der Kooij himself acknowledges that fragment xiv must have been situated to the left of group i (see below). The absence of plaster fragments to the south of group ii might be explained equally by the limited extent of the plaster surface, or by its destruction once it had fallen from the wall.

Then again, the absence of fallen plaster fragments south of group ii might give slight preference to the possibility that group i came from a surface oriented toward the south. But, the dimensions of this surface present a difficulty. It is probable that fragment xiv is, more or less, contiguous with the left-hand edge of group i (see below) and van der Kooij has estimated that the combined width of these two columns would have been approximately 80cm, or perhaps even a little wider. However, the walls in this part of

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137 Cf. ibid, 242.
138 Note that much of the plaster that was originally situated between groups i and ii has apparently disappeared without a trace.
139 Cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 244.
the complex are, on average, approximately only 50cm thick (cf. fig.7.2). Consequently, if the text did continue around a corner, it most probably ran along the northern wall of room EE334 (i.e. the southern face of wall B/C5.42). This would presuppose that the northern end of wall B/C5.36 (bearing collection II) protruded slightly beyond wall B/C5/42, at the corner-entrance, similar to the doorway in room BB418 (fig.7.2, grid ref. E-6).

(6) According to the description in ATDA, the fragments of group i were lying face-down in the rubble, with the vertical border-line of the left-hand margin oriented to the north and east.\(^{140}\) This distribution might be consistent with the plaster having fallen from a relatively high position on either (a) the eastern wall of room EE334 (i.e. the western face of wall B/C5.36); (b) the northern wall of room EE334 (i.e. the southern face of wall B/C5.42); or (c) the western wall of room EE335 (i.e. the eastern

\(^{140}\) Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla*, 27. The orientation of these fragments has not received as much attention in reconstructions of the text, presumably owing to the uncertain nature of the evidence. However, their orientation is suggestive of their original disposition.
face of wall B/C5.36). If (a), the plaster must have fallen forward (i.e. pivoting 180 degrees along its lower edge). However, this is unlikely, due to the fact that fragments of group i were distributed among the upper levels the rubble, rather than lying beneath it, as would be expected to be the case if the wall had collapsed onto the plaster. If (b), the plaster must have fallen forward with a clock-wise twisting motion.

If (c), the plaster must have fallen with an anti-clockwise twisting motion. This might have occurred in two different ways: either falling backwards with the wall; or pivoting forward with a twisting motion along a horizontal crack at its lower edge (cf. (5) below). In either case, it must have taken considerable force to cause the fragments to rotate and fall in their final position.

Both (b) and (c) would be consistent with a south-west collapse of the corner between walls B/C5.36 and B/C5.42, dragging with it a length of the wall on either side.

Fragment xiv, with the drawing of the sphinx, was lying face-down with the horizontal base-line (equivalent to the top-line of Combination I) oriented to the south. This may give preference to scenario (c), as it is difficult to imagine how the fragment could have landed in that orientation if it was originally attached to wall

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141 As van der Kooij observed, the fragments are unlikely to have fallen from the south (or, for that matter, the west), as, in that case, more plaster would have been found in those directions, Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla*, 27.

142 Two further observations may be made in response to this suggestion. 1) The estimated line of the wall in the top plans published by the excavators (fig.7.2) depict the wall as angled to the north-west, meaning that the supposed position of the corner is a short distance to the left of the corresponding corner in the south-east of room EE334. This may have predisposed the wall to topple in a south-westerly direction (i.e. from the north-eastern corner of room EE334). 2) The bench at the southern end of wall B/C5.36 may have provided some degree of structural support to the southern end of the wall.
Nevertheless, the general confusion of the fragments as they fell from the wall means that these observations must be held very tentatively indeed.

(7) According to a recent report by Dominic Dowling and Bijan Samali, the predominant modes of seismic damage to mud-brick buildings are “vertical corner cracking at the intersection of orthogonal walls, and horizontal, vertical, and diagonal cracking due to out-of-plane flexure…This often leads to overturning of walls and collapse of the roof”.144 This description seems to be consistent with the manner in which the plaster has cracked, and the distribution of the fragments in two principal groups.145 However, as so little of the wall has been preserved, this must remain, to some extent, conjectural. While this does not amount

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143 That is, if fragment xiv had fallen facedown from the north, then, presumably, the base-line would be oriented to the north. This would be the case regardless of whether it fell with the wall or independently of it.


145 I am indebted to Dr. Kyle Keimer for this observation.
to positive proof of a single column, it allows the possibility to be retained.

(8) The right-hand margin of Combination I is only preserved to a width of approximately 3.5cm and, consequently, it is impossible to know whether it was attached to the same vertical edge as Combination II. Nevertheless, van der Kooij described a slight decrease of plaster thickness on the right-hand side of Combination I; although, this is no longer perceptible owing to the manner in which the plaster was mounted for display. Such thinning might be consistent with the application of the plaster as it was pushed toward the edge of the wall; however, it might also have been caused by unevenness in the surface of the wall. Regardless, this thinning does not necessarily indicate that group i came from the same column as group ii, as it may equally have fallen from the right-hand side of the hypothetical south facing column.

(9) Van der Kooij also argued that there is an inclining angle (approximately 20 degrees from horizontal) running along the upper edges of Combination I and fragment xiv. Despite considerable damage to the plaster, van der Kooij argues that this incline may be traced continuously across the thinning upper edge of both fragments and indicates that fragment xiv, with the drawing of the sphinx, must have come from the left of Combination I. However, once again, the mounting of the inscription means that this cannot be verified.\(^{146}\) The original proximity of fragment xiv and Combination I is further suggested by the location of fragment xiv with group i in room EE334.\(^{147}\)

(10) The composition of the horizontal border line on fragments i(a); i(b); xiii(a); and xiv, provides further evidence of multiple columns. The border on fragments xiii(a) and xiv consists of 5

\(^{146}\) Lemaire, “La disposition originelle des inscriptions sur plâtre de Deir ʿAllā”, 82.

\(^{147}\) Cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 242.
lines (in a 4 + 1 pattern), while the border at the top of i(a) and i(b) consists of 4 lines (in a 3 + 1 pattern), which tend to separate slightly on the right-hand side.\footnote{Cf. ibid, 242–45 and the reconstruction on p.243. Note also that fragment xiii(a) evinces a vertical stroke, perhaps indicating a partition of the plaster surface above the line; i.e. to the left of the sphinx. This partition is not repeated below the line.} Furthermore, examination of the uninscribed space above and below the border on both groups of fragments leaves no doubt that there must have been some sort of uninscribed surface to the left of Combination I.

(11) As was discussed by Hoftijzer, the second half of line 2 on fragment v(q) was apparently intentionally left blank (cf. §5.1.2).\footnote{Cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 88.} Although not certain, it is probable that this fragment should be associated with the end of Combination I. This suggests internal section divisions, but it remains unclear whether this \textit{vacat} should be interpreted as evidence of the end of a column, or only of an awareness of internal divisions (i.e. paragraphing).

(12) Finally, in addition to the inscribed fragments and the drawing of the sphinx, there were a number of unadorned fragments and one, xiii(c), with a zigzag pattern drawn in red ink. This suggests that a section of the plaster surface was left blank or perhaps decorated with drawings and patterns as was the case at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.\footnote{Cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 240, and n.2. In fact, van der Kooij reported the presence of a number of drawings on frags. viii(a), xiii(a) and xiv; cf. Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, \textit{Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla}, 25.}

These considerations allow a tentative reconstruction of the plaster surface. Observations (1), (6) and (7) admit the possibility that the plaster was applied directly to the eastern face of wall B/C5.36. In light of observation (6), this seems to be the most likely of the viable alternatives. If that is correct, observations (1), (3) and (8) suggest that the text was probably arranged in a single column, with Combination I situated above Combination II. This does not necessarily imply that Combinations I and II...
contain a continuous narrative; cf. observation (11). Finally, observations (9), (10) and (12) suggest that there was a plaster surface to the left of the column of text, which contained at least the drawing of the sphinx, and perhaps included other drawings as well.

Unfortunately, no single line of either Combination is preserved intact; but, there is reason to believe that not much plaster has been lost between fragments i(c) and i(d), suggesting an inscribed column width of a little over 30cm.¹⁵¹ The margin on the left-hand edge of ii(c) is approximately 9cm wide,¹⁵² suggesting a total column width of a little over 40cm. Although we cannot be absolutely certain, this reconstruction provides a useful working hypothesis, and a point of departure for an analysis of the spatial context of the inscription(s).

Two additional factors provide circumstantial evidence for a single column of text, with Combination I situated above Combination II:

(1) Although their purpose is not entirely clear, the “benches” in room EE335 suggest prima facie that the room had a special character. Moreover, the positioning of these benches opposite and facing the plaster surface on wall B/C5.36 suggests an interconnectedness that would be disrupted if the text continued around a corner into room EE334 (see below).

(2) Although the internal sequence of the two fragments is a matter of debate, there is reason to believe that Combination II references themes that are introduced in Combination I (see §5.1.2.2). In fact, if the proposed in interpretation for II.17 is accepted, it seems that in the DAPT ספר has a technical meaning, referring to the text itself. In light of the available evidence, it is reasonable to suppose that the ספר referenced in II.17 (assuming that reading is correct) is to be identified with that introduced in I.1. This testifies to the coherence of the two combinations, with the superscription in Combination I coming first; although, it is

¹⁵¹ Cf. van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ʿAllā”, 244.
¹⁵² Cf. ibid, 244.
possible that II.17 references a no-longer extant portion of the text.

One final question pertains to whether the plaster was applied to the wall specifically in order to serve as a writing surface? As was noted above, comparable plaster surfaces have been discovered in relation to five other walls associated with Phase IX. These surfaces were not discussed in ATDA, as they did not come to light until the joint Jordanian-Dutch excavations of the 1970s and 1980s; however, the desirability of comparative data was mentioned at that time.\(^{153}\) It seems that these plastered surfaces only covered a portion of the walls to which they were affixed, and it was suggested by the excavators that they may have been functional, intended to reflect and maximise the available light.\(^{154}\) In light of the fact that room EE335, with the “Balaam” text, is apparently the only

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place in which the plaster was inscribed, it is probable that, in this case, the use of the plaster as a writing surface was secondary.

7.6.2. The room

Assuming the reconstruction just described, the most striking feature of room EE335 is the configuration of the “benches” (B/C5.69 and B/C6.110) facing the plaster text(s) in the north-western corner. As noted above, there is reason to believe that the use of the plaster as a writing surface was secondary, and it may have been this configuration that suggested its suitability for such a purpose in the first place.

The benches themselves were fashioned from old wall stumps dating from an earlier phase and must have been a deliberate and original feature of the Phase IX room. Since no comparable benches were found in any other Phase IX loci, it seems reasonable to conclude that room EE335 always had a special function. But it would be premature to assume a priori that the room functioned as some kind of cultic space, as the purpose of the benches remains unclear (cf. §4.5). It should be noted, however, that the distance from wall B/C5.36 to the eastern bench (approximately 3.75m), and the acute angle between the inscribed surface and the western end of the southern bench, would have made it impossible

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156 Two partially preserved stone and mud-brick “platforms” of indeterminate height were uncovered in the south-eastern part of the published excavation area (grid ref. A-8) in what the excavators have interpreted as a complex of storage rooms; however, these do not dominate the room in the same manner as the “benches” in room EE335 and do not seem to be directly comparable; cf. van der Kooij and Ibrahim, Picking Up the Threads, 82.
157 Ibrahim and van der Kooij, for example, noted that some sanctuary rooms have benches along the walls to put objects on (cf. §4.5); although, they commented that only the southern bench would have been suitable for this purpose (presumably because the eastern bench was not backed by a wall to stop offerings from falling off) and, in any case, no such objects were found in the room; cf. Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX”, 20–21.
for someone sitting in those positions to read the text(s). This difficulty would have been compounded by the fact that the room, which was apparently roofed with reed matting, must have been comparatively dark; although, these difficulties could be alleviated if the narrative was read aloud by someone standing in the north-western corner (cf. II.17).

Regardless of the benches’ purpose, their position in relation to the text(s) creates a conceptually unified space—although, this is admittedly an interpretation—suggesting that the functions of both were intrinsically bound together, and this, in turn, suggests that in some sense the space between wall B/C5.36 and the eastern bench (that is, the majority of room EE335) was probably also given over to that purpose.

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158 I experimented with this in a limited way in the relatively well-lit conditions in the Jordan Museum and found that the small size of the letters made it very difficult to read the text from a distance of more than a couple of meters.
This apparently unified configuration raises the question of the location of the entrances and thoroughfares through room EE335. There is evidence that there was originally a doorway located in the south-eastern corner of the room, which had been deliberately sealed-up sometime prior to the destruction of Phase IX (grid ref. C-6). Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing why this alteration was made; whether it was associated with a change in the function of the room, perhaps related to the addition of the DAPT, implying increasing specialisation, or whether it is evidence that at some stage the room was decommissioned. Then again, as noted above, there is also the possibility of a doorway in either the western wall or the north-western corner of the room; though, no trace of a opening was found in either location. This lack of evidence is due, in part, to the difficulties involved with identifying the walls and thresholds of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX (see above), which is compounded in room EE335 by the speed with which the excavators were compelled to work in order to recover the plaster fragments in 1967. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, as far as can be ascertained, most Phase IX rooms had only one entrance, or two if they served as a passageway to another room (cf. fig.7.2). Accordingly, while there may have been an entrance in either wall B/C5.36 or the north-western corner of room EE335, it is comparatively unlikely that there was an entrance in both. In light of the angled plaster on the right-hand edge of Combination II, it seems reasonable to infer the existence of a doorway or opening in the north-western corner of the room.

This inference is further supported by practical considerations, in that if there was an entrance in the wall between rooms EE335 and EE334, anyone entering the bench-room would have to pass through the space between the benches and the text(s), thereby disrupting the unity of the room. The same would be true, to a lesser extent, if the entrance was in the

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160 Hence the north-western corner is left blank in the published top plans. Cf. the description of the discovery and recovery of the fragments in Franken, “Deir ʿAlla Re-Visited”, esp. 7–8.
north-western corner of room EE335, although in that case someone entering the room could make their way along the northern wall with minimal disruption. Then again, this consideration might suggest that there were special times when the room was sealed or demarcated (perhaps physically) for the use of those within, and that during those times no one was able to enter from the outside.

Notwithstanding the fact that the inscribed surface was, therefore, apparently situated near a doorway, there is no reason to think that it was directly associated with the liminal space, as was apparently the case with Kajr4.2 and 4.3. Rather, this proximity to the entrance should be attributed to the secondary use of the plaster as a writing surface, and it may reasonably be assumed that any interaction with the text(s) took place fully and exclusively within the room.

Another possibility was suggested by, Franken, who, in his later works, proposed an altogether different reconstruction of the bench-room. Franken argued that room EE335 together with the two rooms to its south comprised a single complex without doorways that was entered by an opening from above.161 A similar situation is evinced in at least one other Phase IX room (grid ref. B-4/5), where the walls were preserved without doorways to a height of 1m. There, entry was apparently attained via stairs on either side of the western wall.162 According to Franken, the design of the bench-room complex, thus reconstructed, might be interpreted as a symbolic representation of a sacred cave or grotto where contact could be established between the living and the divine.163 As such, he suggested that

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162 This room has been interpreted as a storeroom, cf. Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX”, 18; Franken, “Balaam at Deir ‘Alla and the Cult of Baal”, 194.
the complex might be compared to the possible Cave I shrine at Jerusalem and the extramural rock-cut shrine at Samaria.\(^{164}\) Significantly, this reconstruction would imply that the room (or, rather, the complex of rooms) was deliberately segregated from the rest of the Phase IX complex. However, Franken made no attempt to justify his contention that there was no doorway leading into room EE335, and his reconstruction is rendered unlikely by several factors: (1) as has already been noted, virtually no traces remain of the wall foundations in the north-western corner of room EE335; nevertheless, the convex curve on the right-hand side of Combination II suggests that these fragments were attached to a vertical edge. For the reasons outlined above, this is best interpreted as a doorway, rather than an independent structure; (2) Franken did not account for the secondary sealing of the doorway in the south-eastern corner of room EE335, which clearly indicates that at some stage the three rooms were no longer considered a single complex and would be problematic if entry was attained from the south-east, as Franken supposed;\(^{165}\) (3) there is no


\(^{165}\) Although it is possible that the layout of the rooms and the means of ingress (especially if attained through the roof) might have been altered several times during their use.
evidence of stairs providing access to any of the rooms, as in B-4/5; although, the means of access to the two southern rooms remains a problem. It should also be noted that one of the principle criteria for interpreting the sites at Jerusalem and Samaria as cult sites was their contents, which included, among other things, pillar figurines, incense stands and house shrines; however, these objects were conspicuously absent from room EE335 (see below).\textsuperscript{166} Accordingly, while Franken may be correct with regard to the basic function of the bench-room, there does not seem to be sufficient evidence to support his suggestion that it was designed as a symbolic representation of a sacred grotto.

Several other features of room EE335 are worthy of note. First, the configuration of the benches, text(s) and (probably) the doorway gives the room a westward orientation. Unfortunately there has not yet been a detailed study of the conventions of architectural orientation in Transjordan. However, it can be demonstrated that this westward orientation is in contrast to the prevailing custom in Israel and Judah, where, as Avraham Faust has demonstrated, there was a conscientious avoidance of the west in architectural design.\textsuperscript{167} Faust has further argued on ethnographic and linguistic grounds that this practice most likely reflects an underlying cosmological principle, which imbued the west with negative connotations associated with the sea/chaos, sunset and death.\textsuperscript{168} Interestingly, Faust has argued that the antecedents of this practice can already be observed in the Bronze Age, suggesting that it is not an exclusively Israelite custom.\textsuperscript{169} Whatever the case, it is probably


\textsuperscript{167} Cf. Avraham Faust, “Doorway Orientation, Settlement Planning and Cosmology in Ancient Israel during Iron Age II”, \textit{Oxford Journal of Archaeology} 20 (2001): 129–55. While Faust’s observations were limited, to a large extent, to the orientation of doorways, at Deir ‘Alla the westward orientation is assured on the basis of the presumed relationship between the benches and the text(s).


\textsuperscript{169} Faust, “Doorway Orientation”, 145–47.
significant that this westward alignment means that the room and anyone viewing the DAPT would have been oriented toward the setting sun. Given that Combination I describes a nocturnal revelation, this might suggest that the room—and any activities conducted within it—was intended primarily for nocturnal use. Interestingly, Ibrahim and van der Kooij also raised this possibility when they commented, in an attempt to account for the general lack of artefacts in the room, “perhaps it included a place to sleep, to obtain a vision!”^{170}

Second, apart from a few unremarkable pottery-sherds the room was almost completely devoid of objects.^{171} As has already been noted (§4.5), the fact that the destruction of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX occurred suddenly means that the objects found within the various rooms is likely to give a fairly good indication of the way the complex was used at the time of destruction; although, in room EE335 this should be qualified by the possibility, noted above, that the space was decommissioned sometime prior to the destruction of Phase IX.^{172} As such, it is interesting to note that the only object that was found inside the room was an oil lamp, discovered near the north-western corner (that is, close to the DAPT).^{173} This may support the inference that the room was used at night; however, this too should be qualified, as the fact that room EE335 was apparently roofed (with the doorway facing north), means that it may be assumed that the room was relatively dark much of the time.

Third, according to the reconstruction outlined above, it is interesting to note that the drawing of the sphinx faces away from the doorway. Consequently, if the image was intended to have an apotropaic function in

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^{172} On the likelihood that the contents of room EE335 reflect its use at the time of the destruction, cf. Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX”, , 21, n.3.

terms of guarding the text (which is by no means certain), this was evidently not conceived in terms of any threat associated with the doorway (cf. §4.9.2.1.6).\(^{174}\) Instead, a possible, albeit speculative, explanation might be sought in the common Semitic worldview that conceives the past as being in front and the future behind.\(^{175}\) According to this embodied metaphor, the fact that the sphinx has its back to the DAPT might indicate that—in the eyes of the illustrator—the prophecy had not yet been fulfilled. Was the sphinx perhaps guarding against the woes described in the text? Or was it intended to guard against the recurrence of the calamities?

7.6.3. The building complex

As was noted by Ibrahim and van der Kooij, the general difficulty in identifying doorways throughout the Phase IX settlement means that it is difficult to combine rooms into larger units.\(^{176}\) Be that as it may, the blocking of the doorway in the south-eastern corner of room EE335 shows a clear and deliberate intention to separate the bench-room from the

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\(^{174}\) On the iconography of the sphinx as a protective figure in Israel/Palestine, cf. Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169; Freiburg: University Press, 1999), 234, with references.


\(^{176}\) Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ’Alla Phase IX”, 18.
southern rooms. However, as noted above, the motivation and timing of this are not known. Even so, mention should be made here of one unusual find; namely, a small hand-shaped object made of serpentine (fig.7.9) that was found on the floor of the south-western room (grid ref. B/C-5/6). It has been suggested by the excavators that this object might have been connected in some way with incense or ointment and, as such, it might be related to the special function of room EE335—albeit from a period before the sealing of the doorway. Intriguingly the stem of the spoon-shaped stone object is hollow, leading Ibrahim and van der Kooij to refer to it as a “pipe”, and this remarkable characteristic invites speculation. If room EE335 did in fact function as a sacred space for receiving or inducing visions, might this object have had a function related to the use of hallucinogenic substances? Of course, this cannot be substantiated, and the function of the object and the reasons for its occurring in that location remain uncertain.


178 Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX”, 20–21, n.2

179 Volkert Haas has collated considerable textual evidence for the use of hallucinogens in the ancient Near East, including a possible reference in VAT 10057, obv.29, to the use of juniper smoke as part of a ritual to induce a dream-vision about the underworld; cf. Volkert Haas, *Materia Magica et Medica Hethitica* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 121–23, esp. §X.2.5. For an English translation of the text, cf. *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA 3; ed. Alasdair Livingstone; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989), 68–76, esp. 70; note that Haas’ is not the only possible interpretation of the text and the juniper smoke might not necessarily have been related directly to dream incubation. Haas also cited a number of allusions to the use of hallucinogenic liquid concoctions, and it might be that the spoon-pipe was designed as a sort of funnel for mixing and imbibing liquids. In this regard, it is also interesting to note two bone tubes or “pipes”, at least one of which was recovered from Phase IX, the function of which is also unknown; cf. van der Kooij and Ibrahim, *Picking Up the Threads*, 83–84, fig.104, and p. 110 objects 88 and 89.
The nature of the space to the north of room EE335 is also relatively uncertain, but it appears to have been a sort of communal courtyard (see below). Consequently, if there was a doorway in the north-western corner of room EE335, access into the room would have been direct (i.e. not mediated via other rooms), further testifying to the separateness of the space in which the inscription was found.

7.6.4. The total excavated area (Phase IX)

It is difficult to know precisely what sequence to follow when describing the total excavated area of Phase IX, as it is inevitable that to some extent the order in which the rooms are introduced will form a prejudicial impression of their interrelatedness. It should also be noted that the following observations relate only to the area represented in the published top plan (fig.7.2), and it is not known precisely how this complex was related to the rest of the Phase IX village. In what follows I begin at the northern end of the excavated area for the reason that if Ephʿal and Naveh are correct to translate the words “of the gate” on the inscribed stone and vessel (cf. §5.2.2), and hence to associate them with a system of commercial measurements, then it is reasonable to suppose that the entrance to the complex as a whole is to be sought to the north, in the vicinity of the rooms in which those objects were found—possibly adjoining the north-south alleyway (grid ref. E-6). Indeed, even today,

180 Cf. van der Kooij, “Use of Space in Settlements”, 71, fig. 5.3.

181 In his later works Franken adopted a practice of describing the complex by beginning at the eastern end and moving west; cf. Franken, “Balaam at Deir ḏʿAlla and the Cult of Baal”, 183–202; idem, “Deir ḏʿAlla and its Religion”, 25–52. It is possible that in this he was influenced by the method of van der Kooij and Ibrahim, Picking Up the Threads, which followed the exhibition at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden (cf. the forward to Picking up the Threads), focussing on the relatively well preserved remains of the south-eastern rooms.

182 Assuming, that is, that commercial activity would have been conducted in and around the entrance or “gate” of the complex, as the expression implies, cf. Ephʿal and Naveh, “The Jar of the Gate”, 62.
artificial terrace on the north-western slopes affords the easiest access to the summit of the tell (cf. fig. 7.10). Furthermore, this seems to have been roughly the location of main entrance in the Late Bronze and early Iron Ages. But it is stressed that this is only a tentative hypothesis. Due to the severe erosion of the northern slopes and the limited excavation to the south and west, the location of the main entrance to the settlement cannot be proved, and perhaps all that can be said in support of this hypothesis is that it is not inconsistent with the available evidence. Accordingly, I will discuss the plan of the settlement in terms of five interrelated zones: four roughly corresponding to the north-eastern, north-western, south-eastern and south-western quarters respectively, and a fifth, comprising the (more or less) central courtyard and the bench-room.

There is little that can be said with certainty about the rooms in the north-eastern quarter, and at present it is best to avoid speculation.

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183 Note that the slopes to the south and east are particularly steep and actually rise above the Phase IX remains (cf. fig. 7.1). This leaves the shallower incline to the north and west. However, Franken has noted that the wind has greatly enlarged the western summit of the tell, making it impossible to determine its original shape; cf. Franken, Excavations at Deir ‘Alla 1, 3.

184 Cf. Franken, “The Excavations at Deir ‘Allā in Jordan: 2nd Season”, 363–64, 368. Circumstantially, it is interesting to note that a gateway on the northern slopes would be aligned toward the settled parts of the valley, which may be consistent with the general alignment of the other architectural features of the Phase IX settlement. As van der Kooij observed, “by this orientation the inhabitants expressed their feeling of being part of the valley structure – they apparently liked to live there!”; cf. Gerrit van der Kooij, “Use of Space in Settlements”, 71. This comports well with Kaptijn’s conclusion that the irrigation systems of the central Jordan Valley gave rise to an integrated regional network; in other words, a community (see §7.1).
The area to the north-west is severely eroded and it is impossible to know what percentage of this part of the tell has been lost. Nevertheless, it was in this quarter that the complex of four small rooms in which the inscribed jar and stone were found. The other finds do little to clarify the function of these rooms; although, the pottery repertoire seems to reflect storage activities. Two other unusual objects were found in these rooms. One was an ornate chalice and the other an oversized loomweight. The nature and collocation of these unusual objects led Franken to postulate a cultic context. However, it should be noted that the pierced conical “loomweight” is unlike any of the numerous loomweights found at the site. Was this object, too, a unit of measure? This possibility was apparently entertained by van der Kooij and Ibrahim, and lends support to

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185 According to van der Kooij (personal communication), perhaps as much as 10m has eroded away from the northern slopes.


the suggestion that the material repertoire of the rooms might be connected to commerce.\textsuperscript{189}

The complex of rooms to the south-east (grid ref. A-7; B-7/8) has been discussed in detail by van der Kooij and Ibrahim, who concluded that they were probably used for domestic activities connected with the preparation of food and weaving, as well as for storing domestic objects, including grains, cooking utensils, tools and dung (presumably for fuel).\textsuperscript{190} Nevertheless, several items, including several bone inlay panels, suggest a degree of opulence.\textsuperscript{191}

The complex of rooms to the south-west is more difficult to interpret. In addition to the usual domestic and storage spaces this quarter also includes a number of unusual architectural features. One room (grid ref. C-3/4) had a large brick lined bath shaped pit (DD417), in the bottom of the pit were a grinding stone, some pestles and 10 loomweights. The function of this installation is unclear.\textsuperscript{192} The burnt room directly to the east (grid ref. C-4) had a 1m deep trapezoidal pit with a step in the north-western corner (DD409); 30 loomweights were found inside this pit, leading Ibrahim and van der Kooij to suggest that it may have been a special kind of loom.\textsuperscript{193} Finally, reference should be made to the enigmatic shallow pit in the centre of room EE334 (see above). The purpose of these features remains a mystery.\textsuperscript{194}

The central courtyard seems to have functioned as a sort of hub of the excavated area, admitting access to each of the complexes from the east and west. One notable feature is a clay bin (grid ref. D-7) at the

\textsuperscript{189} Cf. ibid, 21–22.

\textsuperscript{190} van der Kooij and Ibrahim, \textit{Picking Up the Threads}, 82–88, esp. 85, 86.

\textsuperscript{191} Cf. Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, 23.

\textsuperscript{192} Cf. ibid, 20. It has been noted, that is seems unlikely that this installation was used for dyeing since no dye residues have been found; cf. Vilders, “The Stratigraphy and the Pottery of Phase M at Deir ʿAlla”, 190.


\textsuperscript{194} Vilders suggested dry storage of grain or preparation of flax as possible explanations, cf. Vilders, “The Stratigraphy and the Pottery of Phase M at Deir ʿAlla”, 190.
eastern end of the courtyard. Perhaps this served as a trough for feeding animals, or a bin for the dry-storage of grain. A number of cooking installations were located near the centre of the courtyard. Given the total absence of vessels in room EE335, there is no evidence that these cooking facilities should be connected directly with the benches or the DAPT. As such, they may have served as communal facilities for the preparation of food. It is, therefore, significant that room EE335 was apparently accessed directly from this communal space. On the one-hand, it seems that the room was deliberately segregated from the rest of the complex (e.g. the blocking of the door in the south-eastern corner); on the other, it seems that it was not entirely removed from the quotidian life of the inhabitants.

7.7. Conclusions

The picture that emerges from the archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX is of a modest village, organised according to individual households. For the most part, the settlement seems to reflect the material culture of the Central Jordan Valley and to have been integrated into the valley network; though there are signs of probable trade connections to the west during this period. There is little that can be confidently described as cultic, but a number of factors, including the scale of weaving activity and a number of unusual installations and artefacts—including the bench-room and the DAPT—are extraordinary.

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195 That is to say, there is nothing to support the view that the bench-room was used for ritual feasting, or the consumption of food in any other context.

196 Cf. Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ʿAlla Phase IX”, 18–19. Note, however, that food preparation was not restricted to this area alone. A number of smaller cooking installations (tannurs) were located inside rooms of the Phase IX complex, and these might have served as “winter ovens”; cf. Elena Rova, “Tannurs, Tannur Concentrations and Centralised Bread Production at Tell Beydar and Elsewhere: An Overview”, in Paleonutrition and Food Practices in the Ancient Near East: Towards a Multidisciplinary Approach (ed. Lucio Milano; HANEM 14; Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Libreria, 2014), 127, n.46.
Notwithstanding the apparently modest nature of the settlement in this period, the technical skill evinced in the preparation and execution of the DAPT indicates that at some point there must have been at least one individual, proficient in the scribal arts, who resided at the site or passed through. Perhaps it was this individual who occupied the richly adorned household in the south-eastern quarter?

The layout of the bench-room (room EE335) and its relative segregation suggest that the room had a highly specialised function, distinct from the more mundane aspects of life in the settlement. Unfortunately, the absence of artefacts means there is little that can be concluded about this function, but several features invite speculation. The positioning of the benches in relation to the DAPT suggests that the western part of the room was a focal point of whatever activities were conducted in the space. However, as noted above, the special function of the room probably predates the inscribing of the plaster surface. As such, the DAPT should be understood to be related—but not essential—to the function of the bench-room. All of this would seem to suggest the DAPT did not feature, in an interactive sense, in the regular daily activities of the community. This might, in turn, suggest that their presence was merely decorative, but, as was noted in Chapter 5 the effort that was taken to correct the text, together with the possible injunction to recite the text(s) orally in II.17, suggests that their contents were important. Furthermore, although the benches are not ideal for reading the inscription, they are well situated for viewing the DAPT, or listening to a performance of the text(s). This may suggest that the DAPT had ritual significance.

Yet, it is possible to go even further in our speculations. In light of the contents of the DAPT and the fact that the room was oriented toward the west, it may be that the space was related to the incubation of dreams or some other mantic practices. The phenomenon of dream incubation is
attested throughout the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{197} And, as at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, this hypothesis is consistent with the almost complete lack of artefacts in the room. In this case, it is possible to explain the clay figurines as offerings (dedicated or stored outside of the bench-room) related to the practices of dream incubation—but this is conjecture.\textsuperscript{198}

Whatever the case, the layout of room EE335 strongly suggests that people were interacting with the text in some manner, within the physical and situational confines of the room.

\textsuperscript{197} Kim, \textit{Incubation as a Type-Scene}, 27 – 60, note especially Kim’s discussion of place (pp. 68–69).

\textsuperscript{198} Note, especially, the possible fertility connotations of the figurines, which corresponds to the fertility motif in the DAP. On the figurines, cf. Franken, “Deir ʿAlla and its Religion”, 46–48.
PART THREE

== CONCLUSION ==
We began this study by asking what could impel a functioning oral society to set its traditions in writing? Or, more succinctly, what were early literary texts for? Rather than attempting to develop a general model of textualisation, the study instead sought contextual controls in the form of demonstrable instances of literary text production, where the context of reception could be used as a basis for logical inferences about the text’s audience(s) and function. To this end, the study was devoted to the plaster texts from Kuntillet ʿAjrud and Deir ʿAlla, and the question of functionality was approached via consideration of three variables: format, content, and situation.

In what follows, the KAPT and DAPT will each be discussed in turn, with a focus on localised and particularised characteristics of text production. This discussion will be followed by comparative considerations and finally, generalised observations and desiderata concerning the study of textualisation and the origins of the Hebrew Bible.

8.1. THE KUNTILLET ʿAJRUD PLASTER TEXTS

In the first place it can be noted that the KAPT emerged within a localised writing culture. To an extent, the overall impression of the extraordinarily high rate of text production might be distorted by the accidents of preservation (owing to the favourable conditions for the preservation of ink-based texts at Kuntillet ʿAjrud), and the unusual concentration of inscriptions on the decorated pithoi. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the KAPT were produced alongside numerous examples of written correspondence (e.g. Kajr3.1 and 3.6), probable educational pieces (e.g.
and other occasional documents and literary texts (e.g. *Kajr*3.9). Consequently, it seems that writing would not have struck the audience(s) as something out of the ordinary. What is more, it is probable that one, or more, literate individuals were stationed at the site on a (semi)permanent basis. It does not follow, however, that the KAPT were intended for a literate audience. In fact, the awkward position of the texts (particularly collection 1) would have made them difficult to read. Nevertheless, they must have been highly visible in their prominent position framing the entrance to Building A. This suggests that the primary function of the plaster texts related to their material or visual presence, rather than a denotative purpose.

In addition, the prominent position of the KAPT, and the repetition of the DN YHWH of Teman across both the plaster and pithoi inscriptions, suggests that the plaster texts were authorised and sanctioned by the community. As such, they may be taken as a reflection of the community’s beliefs and practices.

In terms of content, the most striking feature of the KAPT (and other texts) is their close association with the geographical situation of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud in the remote South. This is most evident in the case of collection 1, at the entrance to Building A: e.g. the reference to YHWH of Teman (*Kajr*4.1; cf. 3.6 and 3.9); the southern theophany (*Kajr*4.2); and the (possible) allusion to Cain/Kenites (*Kajr*4.3).

What could explain this preoccupation with place? The answer lies in the immanent tradition. Comparison with biblical theophany motifs suggests that the Southern regions of Sinai and Edom (Teman) were closely identified with the immanence of God—traditionally it was from these southern regions that he would march forth to succour his people (cf. Judg 5:4). What is more, the evidence seems to suggest that, during Phase 3, Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was occupied by a community of priests who were also prophets, drawn to the area as a place of divine immanence. Further still, the eastward orientation of the hill-top, the solar imagery of the southern theophany tradition, and depiction of the processional on Pithos B suggest
an association with the cult of YHWH of Teman, whose appearing was (symbolically) manifest as the sun rose each morning over Edom to the East. Hence, the southern theophany tradition was probably at the forefront of the community’s experience and self-awareness.

This leaves the question: why were the texts written on the walls? Two explanations seem plausible. One possibility is that the texts served an apotropaic function, guarding against the sancta contagion as the morning sun rose over the complex; but in this case we must ask why was collection 1 written on the interior walls of the bench-room? The other possibility is that the texts served a political function, proclaiming theological justification for the existence of a northern Israelite site in the potentially volatile regions of the far south. In this case, the texts might have simultaneously served two purposes: an exclusive one, relating to the separation and segregation of the local nomadic communities, and an inclusive one, giving expression to the Israelite settlers’ perceived right to be in that place.

Ultimately, the second alternative is better able to account for the selection of the texts, and their placement in the entrance to Building A. In this regard, it should be reiterated that it is difficult to ascertain an apotropaic connection in the case of the apparently mythopoeic Kajr4.3; but that a theologising-political function is compatible with the possible allusion to Kenites. Consequently, I cautiously propose that collection 1 served a political purpose, but not in the sense that it was meant to be read and thereby persuade a reading audience through carefully constructed arguments; rather, its power lay in its invoking the authority of the immanent tradition and adapting it to the exigencies of the immediate situation. As such, the texts may be described as emblematic/connotative, rather than denotative.

If this is correct, then the KAPT may be viewed in terms of identity construction, as a projection of an awareness of cultural differentiation. In this case, it is reasonable to suppose that the texts were reproduced from traditional oral lore, since their efficacy is predicated on their indexical
relationship with the Hebraic tradition. As such, we may infer that writing served a memorialising or mnemonic purpose, rather than a generative or creative one.

Collection 2 is more difficult to explain. It is possible however, that this group of texts simply served a decorative function, perhaps inspired by collection 1 and the availability of a blank plaster surface. This might be indirectly supported by the variety of (elaborate) scripts and drawings on the Pithoi. That is, it is possible that a number of the drawings and scripts on both media were produced purely for the pleasure of writing, and an aesthetic appreciation of the written word; as alluded to in Chapter 4, Arabic architectural calligraphic traditions might be illustrative in this regard. But, even if the impulse to write was essentially aesthetic, it is likely that the inspiration for the texts’ content was derived from the situational context. In other words, it seems likely that the themes were drawn from the daily activities of the community. To support this view, we may cite the possible Yahwistic hymn, Kajr3.9, which was apparently accompanied by the illustration of the processional on Pithos B. In that case, it is tempting to interpret Kajr4.5 (the possible allusion to a prophet), and/or Kajr4.6 (apparently containing reported speech), as prophetic apophthegms (cf. the DAPT), related to the mantic practices of the community; but that is conjecture.

8.2. THE DEIR ‘ALLA PLASTER TEXTS

The evidence for a general culture of text production is less extensive at Deir ‘Alla than it is at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Moreover, unlike the KAPT, the evidence seems to suggest that interaction with the DAPT was restricted to a segregated part of the Phase IX village.

The DAPT can best be characterised as a prophetic narrative, recording a doom oracle (Combination I) and its resolution (Combination II). This suggests that its purpose was commemorative: either as a warning of an oracle that was yet to be fulfilled, or a memorial to a successful prognostication. In either case, the materiality of the text transcends the
original performance context, and, as such, the significance of the inscription lies in the enduring importance, and indeed relevance, of the prophecy to its audience(s). Consequently, it is reasonable to infer that the text (or rather its Vorlage) was derived from a pre-existing tradition. Perhaps more importantly, it is possible that II.17 included an instruction to the audience to observe the account, by continuing to perform it orally. If so, then the DAPT seem to point reflexively to their own traditionality, and furnish evidence for the continuation of oral and textual modes side by side.

Following the possible injunction to performative remembrance in II.17, the account is characterised as “a judgement and a chastisement”, suggesting that the oral tradition might have been preserved for didactic purposes. However, this does not necessarily mean that the plaster texts served the same purpose. Indeed, it is not immediately clear what their function could have been. It seems likely that room EE335, in which the DAPT were located, served a special function. Moreover, given that the benches were a structural feature of the room, it seems that the special function predated the application of the plaster texts to the wall surface. This is further supported by the likelihood that the use of plaster as a writing surface was a secondary innovation. Consequently, the text selection may logically be seen as an extension and codification of the prior function of the space.

There are few clues as to what the special function of room EE335 might have been. It is possible that it served as a schoolroom, or perhaps a space for the community to sit and perform stories. However, in view of the text’s contents, the remarkable lack of objects in the room, and the room’s westward orientation, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that it was used for dream incubation. In this case, it is not clear what purpose the DAPT served, they might have been ornamental, visually and symbolically demarcating the space and dedicating it for its mantic use, otherwise they

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1 Compare Gunkel’s whimsical description of a family sitting around the hearth on a winter’s evening listening to traditional tales; cf. Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis*, 41.
might have had an apotropaic function, or they may even have served as a medium, predicated on the numinous associations of writing, which was used to channel a divine presence into the room in order to ensure a successful incubation, then again, they might have been a script for (ritual) performance.

In any case, the scribe’s policy of correcting orthographic errors, indicates that the content of the written word and, more significantly, the accuracy with which the tradition was transmitted, were important to the scribe and his/her intended audience.

8.3. COMPARATIVE LIGHT ON THE PHENOMENON OF TEXTUALISATION

When compared to one another, the KAPT and DAPT suggest several implications for the phenomenon of textualisation:

The first point to note is the similarity of the texts’ presentation and physical environment, particularly in regard to their association with the bench-rooms. This may be coincidental, stemming from the specialised use of the space, especially in light of the possibility that mantic activities were practiced at both sites. However, it does support the premise that the use of writing was inherently functional and situational: written texts emerged from a situation, and addressed that situation in turn.

The second point is that both the KAPT and DAPT had religious content, including possible hymns (Kajr3.9 and 4.2) in the case of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud. Furthermore, at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud the religious content is complemented by the inference that the site was inhabited by an enclave of priests. This supports the view that textualisation emerged, at least in part, among the priestly scribes, and was related to the cult. Be that as it may, there is no clear evidence that prists, or scribes, for that matter, resided at Deir ‘Alla. This might indicate that the bench-room was known regionally as a place where people could come to receive a vision (again predicated on divine immanence). Hence, we might infer that the balaamite traditions and, by extension, the use of writing were conceived in terms of their wider regional significance.
Third, at both sites the evidence suggests that the plaster texts were, in some sense, a continuation of tradition, but in specific performance contexts. In part, this might be influenced by their specialised functions as display texts. Nevertheless, their very meaning and authority seems ultimately to have been derived from their indexical relationship to the immanent tradition. As such, their semantic function exceeded their denotative value.

Fourth, both the KAPT and DAPT evince awareness of the relationship between tradition and culture, and the potential of writing to give material substance to the projection of identity. At Kuntillet ʿAjrud this was realised through the preoccupation with place and the reproduction of distinctively Hebraic traditions. That this entailed an element of intentionality is supported by the tendency (reflected in the ceramic assemblage) toward exclusion of, and separation from, local populations. At Deir ʿAlla the projection of identity seems to be hinted by the use of a divergent script (standing apart from the prevailing Aramean tradition), and perhaps by the use of a vernacular dialect. However, it is possible to press the latter point too far: the script might reflect nothing more than artistic licence and the dialect might reflect a practice (in the Vorlage) of transcribing the tradition in the form it was received.

8.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

Finally, it remains to consider the general implications of the KAPT and DAPT for the formation of the Hebrew Bible.

First, as was noted above, the evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud might support the view that textualisation took place in the context of priestly scribal guilds. However, there is also evidence at the site for contact with the royal court (cf. the רע֯הַמלך in Kajr3.1), and the possibility remains that the scribe(s) at Kuntillet ʿAjrud were attached to the royal bureaucracy. Furthermore, there is evidence that education was conducted at the site (cf. the cognitive error in Kajr3.6). By comparison, at Deir ʿAlla there is virtually no indication of the texts’ writer or intended audience.
Consequently, the study of the plaster texts is inconclusive with regard to the locus of textualisation (i.e. temple, court, or scribal education).

Second, the plaster texts constitute unambiguous evidence, at a comparatively early stage (i.e. by the beginning or middle of the 8th century), for the textualisation of stories and songs comparable to those found in the Hebrew Bible. This suggests that the early emergence of literary texts was characterised by plenitude and diversity. Furthermore, it means we should not be too hasty to dismiss biblical references to literary sources (e.g. the book of Jahsr, Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18; the book of the law 2 Kgs 22:8; the proverbs compiled by the men of Hezekiah, Prov 25:1) as fictive embellishments.

Third, the possible association with prophetic movements suggests that the traditions about the biblical prophets might have been transmitted (perhaps even in writing) among prophetic communities, and ultimately might have been contemporary with the prophets themselves. Certainly, the DAPT provides unequivocal evidence that the literary conventions of the prophetic books (including superscription and frame narrative) had appeared by the end of the 8th century.

Fourth, the KAPT and DAPT testify to the importance of the immanent tradition as a frame of reference and control to creative licence in the processes of textualisation. This reinforces the doubts raised in Chapter 1 concerning the viability of writing as a propagandistic medium. Nevertheless, at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, it seems that there was purposive approach to text selection and the coordination of texts into a concerted communicative effort. Thus, by virtue of their selectiveness, the KAPT suggest a conscious awareness of the communicative potentials of written texts, and the externalisation of tradition. In some sense, this selectiveness may have laid the foundation—along with the availability of annalistic source material and a rudimentary genre of history writing in the form of the royal monumental inscriptions—for the creative and interpretive enterprises that gave rise to the Deuteronomistic History.
These considerations have profound and far reaching implications for the origins of the Hebrew Bible; however, these fall far beyond the scope of the present study. It is therefore a desideratum that an integrated approach should be developed toward the study of the formation of the Hebrew Bible, and that future research should take account of the evidence of the plaster texts as a witness to complex literary textuality in the 8th century B.C.E.

I would like to conclude, then, by echoing Niditch’s call for greater complexity in approaches to textualisation, and sensitivity to the dynamic interface of literature and tradition in pre-exilic Israel.
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Fig.2.1—Location map of the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud inscriptions. Adapted from Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 74, fig.5.1.

Fig.4.1—Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Phase 1. Adapted from Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 11, fig.2.1.

Fig.4.2—Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Phase 1. Adapted from Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 11, fig.2.1.

Fig.4.4—LEFT: Beck’s reconstruction of the seated figure; RIGHT the lyre player on Pithos A. Adapted from Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 191, fig.6.39, 166, fig.6.20 (respectively).

Fig.4.5—The benches at the entrance to Building A, looking North. Adapted from Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 19, fig.2.16.

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Fig.4.7—Kajr4.2. Adapted from Meshel, *Kuntillet ‘Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 111, fig.5.53.

Fig.5.1—Combination I. Adapted from van der Kooij and Ibrahim, *Picking Up the Threads*, 67, fig.85.

Fig.5.3—Combination II. Adapted from van der Kooij and Ibrahim, *Picking Up the Threads*, 68, fig.86.
Fig. 5.4—Deir ‘Alla tablet 1440. Adapted from Franken, “Clay Tablets from Deir ‘Alla”, 378.

Fig. 5.6—The inscribed jar. Adapted from Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla*, pl.16.b.

Fig. 7.1—Topographic map of Tell Deir ‘Alla showing excavation areas. Adapted from van der Kooij, “Deir ‘Alla, Tell”, *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 339.

Fig. 7.2—Top plan of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX. Adapted from Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX”, 19, fig.1.

Fig. 7.3—Top plan showing the distribution of fragments in rooms EE334 and EE335. Adapted from Hoftijzer and van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla*, pl.17.b.

Fig. 7.4—The direction in which the plaster must have fallen according to scenario (b). Adapted from van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Alla”, 246, fig.3.

Fig. 7.5—The direction in which the plaster must have fallen according to scenario (c). Adapted from van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Alla”, 246, fig.3.

Fig. 7.6—The direction in which fragment xiv must have fallen according to scenario (c). Adapted from van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Alla”, 243, fig.2.

Fig. 7.7—van der Kooij’s schematic reconstruction of room EE335, showing a single column of text. Adapted from Adapted from van der Kooij, “Book and Script at Deir ‘Alla”, 241, fig.1.

Fig. 7.8—Enlarged top plan of rooms EE334 and EE335. Adapted from Ibrahim and van der Kooij, “The Archaeology of Deir ‘Alla Phase IX”, 19, fig.1.
Fig. 7.9—The hand-shaped stone object discovered to the south of room EE335. Franken and Moawiyah M. Ibrahim, “Two Seasons of Excavations at Tell Deir ‘Alla, 1986-1978”, 214, pls. XXVIII and XXIX (respectively).

Fig. 7.10—The northern slopes of tell Deir ‘Alla during the first season of excavations. Adapted from Franken, “The Excavations at Deir ‘Allā in Jordan”, pl. 2.

*all other drawings are my own. Note that figures are for illustrative purposes only, they do not have scientific precision.
## Appendix A

### Personal Names at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
<th>Parallels</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. שמעי</td>
<td>Кajr1.1</td>
<td>Exact form unparalleled; cf. (שמעיהו) Arad (ostracon) 27.2; 31.5; 39.obv.2, 7–8; 69.3 (שמעיהו); Jerusalem (pot) 32 (שמעיהו); Lachish (ostracon) 4.obv.6; 19.4 (שמעיהו); Wadi Muraba’at (papyrus) 1B.4 (שמעיהו); BH: Jer 26:20; 29:24; 36:12; Ezra 8:16; Neh 11:15; 2 Chr 17:8; 31:15; 35:9; Ezra 8:13; 10:21; 31; Neh 3:39; 6:10; 10:9; 12:6, 8, 34, 35, 36, 41; 1 Chr 3:22; 4:37; 5:4; 9:14, 16(?); 11:2; 15:8, 11; 24:6; 26:4, 6, 7; 2 Chr 29:14;</td>
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<td>2. עזר</td>
<td>Кajr1.1</td>
<td>Arad (ostraca) 22.2, 23.8, 51.2, 58.3; DH*</td>
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<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>77.3, 5</td>
<td>Lachish (ostracon) 19; Khirbet el-Meshash (ostracon) 1.2</td>
<td>BH: (עב) Neh 3:19; 1 Chr 4:4; 12:10; (עב) 1 Chr 7:21; (עב) Neh 12:42; (עב) Jer 28:1; Neh 10:18; (עב) Ezek 11:1; (עב) 1 Chr 7:26; (^2) seals: DH* 24, 56; Erlsr 26, 112.16*; MP 3.37, 73; WSS 144; 301–04; 467; 495; 594; 691; 696–97; Ammon. WSS 962.</td>
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<td>77.3, 5; Lachish (ostracon) 19; Khirbet el-Meshash (ostracon) 1.2; BH: (עב) Neh 3:19; 1 Chr 4:4; 12:10; (עב) 1 Chr 7:21; (עב) Neh 12:42; (עב) Jer 28:1; Neh 10:18; (עב) Ezek 11:1; (עב) 1 Chr 7:26; (^2) seals: DH* 24, 56; Erlsr 26, 112.16*; MP 3.37, 73; WSS 144; 301–04; 467; 495; 594; 691; 696–97; Ammon. WSS 962.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>בּוּדִי</td>
<td>Kajr1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>עַדְנָּה</td>
<td>Kajr1.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>שֶבֶל</td>
<td>Kajr1.3</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>חָלִיר</td>
<td>Kajr1.3</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>עֵבִּיר</td>
<td>Kajr1.4</td>
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</table>

\(^2\) Incorrectly listed as 1 Chr 27:6 in Dobbs-Allsopp, et al.

\(^3\) אָתִיתוּvu et al. note that in the Hebrew Bible שעָלִי is always written plene, suggesting it might be a shaf‘el l-\(\text{wāw}\) verb from ēlal. As such, they suggest that שעָלִי may actually be derived from the masculine form of שעָלָה (ear of corn); cf. the Safaitic name Sabal; Meshel, Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 78. Be that as it may, there is no undisputed evidence for the use of internal \(m.l.\) at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, and as such שעָלִי might yet be a phonetic spelling equivalent to BH שעָלִי.


\(^5\) Andrew G. Vaughan, Theology, History and Archaeology in the Chronicler’s Account of Hezekia (SBLABS 4; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 1999).
### APPENDIX A: PERSONAL NAMES AT KUNITLET 'AJRUD

| 8. | ך | **Kajr2.1** | **BH**: (עבד) 1 Sam 9:12; 2 Sam 10:22; 23:28; 2 Chr 9:27–30. 
| 9. | כ | **Kajr2.1** | **BH**: (עבד) 2 Sam 20:26; 23:26, 28; 1 Chr 11:28, 40; 27:9. 
| 10. | פ | **Kajr2.2** | **BH**: (עבד) Gen 4:19–20, 23; 36:2, 4, 10, 12, 16; cf. (עבד) Neh 12:16. 
| 11. | ק | **Kajr2.3** | Probable PN. 
| 12. | רא | **Kajr2.7** | **BH**: (רא) 1 Chr 4:2; 5:5; Ezra 2:47; Neh 7:50. 
| 13. | ל | **Kajr2.8** | Probable PN. 
| 14. | ל | **Kajr3.1** | Possibly (ליא) King Joash of Israel 2 Kgs 16. 

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6 Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman)*, 79.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>13:9–13, etc.: cf. (יאוש) Lachish (ostraca) 2, 3, 6; BH: (יוֹאָּש) Judg 6:11, 29, 30, 31; 7:14; 8:13, 29, 32 x2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Kings 22:26; 2 Kings 11:2; 12:20, 21; 13:1, 9, 10, 12, 13 x2, 14, 25; 14:1 x2, 3, 17, 23 x2, 27; Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1; 1 Chron 3:11; 4:22; 12:3; 2 Chron 18:25; 22:11; 24:1, 2, 4, 22, 24; 25:17, 18, 21, 23 x2, 25 x2.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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<td>יָהִלי</td>
<td>Kajr3.1</td>
<td>Unparalleled.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>יָהַר</td>
<td>Kajr3.1</td>
<td>WSS 192.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>שָׁמַע</td>
<td>Kajr3.3</td>
<td>(see Kaj 1.1). שָׁמַעית: (i.e. שָׁמַעית).9</td>
</tr>
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<td>אָמֵר</td>
<td>Kajr3.6</td>
<td>Exact form unparalleled; cf. (אמֵר) Beersheba (jug) 5.2; Gibeon (jar handles) 14–17; 19, 20 (אמֵר) 61; (אמֵר) 1 Chr 24:23; 2 Chr 19:11; 31:15; (אמֵר) Zeph 1:1; Ezra 7:3; Neh 10:4; 11:4; 12:2, 13; 1 Chr 5:33, 37; 6:37; 23:19; seals: DH* 133, 152; MP 3.35, 45, 62; WSS 212, 449; BAR 28 (2002): 42–51, 60.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אָמֵנָי</td>
<td>Kajr3.7</td>
<td>Exact form unparalleled; perhaps gent. or hypocor. of אָמֵן, “reliable trustworthy”10 cf. BH: (אמֵנָי) 2 Kgs 21:18–26; 2 Chron 33:22; WSS 187; unprovenanced Heb. bulla from the Kaufman collection.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>שָׁכַנְי</td>
<td>Kajr3.10</td>
<td>Exact form unparalleled; cf. (שָׁכַנְי) DH* 79, obv.10. BH: (שָׁכַנְי) 1 Chr 24:11; 2 Chr 31:15; (שָׁכַנְי) Ezra 8:3, 5; 10:2; Neh 3:29; 6:18; 12:3; 1 Chr 3:21–22; seals: DH* 16; MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Ahituv et al. note that there is not enough space for a wāw at the end of this name, but argue, nonetheless, that, יָהִלי is probably a shortened form of the theophoric PN יָהִלי; Meshel, Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 90. There is analogous Biblical evidence for the practice of abbreviating PNN by dropping the theophoric element; see Arnold A. Wieder, “Ugaritic-Hebrew Lexicographical Notes”, JBL 84 (1965): 161.

8 Following the vocalization of Ahituv et al.; Meshel, Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teman), 91.

9 See the discussion in ibid, 92.

10 Ibid, 98.

APPENDIX A: PERSONAL NAMES AT KUNTILLET ‘AJRUD

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. אָמֶץ</td>
<td><em>Kajr</em>3.10</td>
<td>Beersheba (ostracon) 1.4 (אמש); <em>Tel Dan</em> (jug) 1 (anus); Moab. WSS 1007, 1018; <em>BH</em>: (אסף) Isa 1:1; 2 Kgs 19:2, 20; 2 Chr 26:22, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. שְׁמַרְיָּה</td>
<td><em>Kajr</em>3.10</td>
<td>Samaria (ostracon) 1.1–2; 13.2; 14.2; 21.1–2; <em>seals</em>. WSS 377; cf. (שמריהו) <em>Arad</em> (ostracon) 18.obv.4; <em>BH</em>: (שמריהו) 1 Chr 12:6; (שמשרי) 2 Chr 11:19, Ezra 10:32, 41; <em>seals</em>: WSS 309, 375–76.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. אֵלִיָּה</td>
<td><em>Kajr</em>3.10</td>
<td>Exact form unparalleled; cf. (אליהו) Jerusalem (jar) 10; <em>BH</em>: (אליהו) 1 Kgs 17:1 2 Kgs 1:10; 2 Chr 26:22, etc.; (אליהו) 2 Kgs 1:3; Mal 3:23; Ezra 10:21, 26; <em>seals</em>: Avigad et al. 2000, no. 38, 12 <em>BPPS</em> 32; <em>MP</em> 3.28–29; WSS 66–67, 76, 435, 537.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. עֻזִיָּה</td>
<td><em>Kajr</em>3.10</td>
<td>WSS 3–4; cf. (עזיהו) <em>Arad</em> 20.2 (עזא); <em>BH</em>: (עזיו) 2 Kgs 15:32, 34; Isa 1:1; 61; 7:1; Ezra 10:21; Neh 11:4; 1 Chr 6:9; 27:25; 2 Chr 26:1, 3, 8–9, 11, 14, 18–19, 21–23; 27:2; (עזיו) 2 Kgs 15:13, 30; Hos 1:1; Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5; <em>seals</em>: WSS 299–300, 501, 654.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. מצרי</td>
<td><em>Kajr</em>3.10</td>
<td>Possibly a nickname: <em>DH</em> 79.obv.10, attested in Ug. and Phoen. (<em>PTU</em>, 161; <em>PNPPI</em>, 142, 238–39); <em>seals</em>: WSS 1093; <em>MP</em> 3.61a-b; cf. (מצר) WSS 556.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. אָשָא</td>
<td><em>Kajr</em>3.16</td>
<td>Jerusalem (jar fragment) 11 (אשא); Samaria (ostracon) 22.2; 23.2; 24.1 ([א]שא); 26.1; 27.1; 28.1–2; 29.1; 37.3; 39.3 ([א]שא); 102.1 ([א]שא); Ammon. WSS 920; cf. <em>BH</em>: (אשא) 13 1 Kgs 22:42; 2 Chr 15:1–7, 12–15; 16:12, 13; 17:1; Jer 17:5.</td>
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13 As noted by Ahituv et al., the spelling אָשָא (as opposed to biblical אָשָּׁא) might suggest that the scribe at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud still perceived a distinction between the consonants sin and sâmek; Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud* (*Horvat Teman*), 104.
Arad (ostracon) 71.A.3 (גֵּדֵי).
Samaria (ostracon) 2.2; 4.2; 5.2 (גֵּדֵי); 6.2 (גֵּדֵי), 7.2–3, 16a.2, 16b.2, 17a.2, 17b.2 (גֵּדֵי), 18.2, 30.2, 33.2 (גֵּדֵי); 34.2 (גֵּדֵי), 35.2 (גֵּדֵי), 42.3 (גֵּדֵי); seals: BPPS 42; WSS 12, 117–18, 454, 467, 628–29, 649.

Arad (ostracon) 110.2; BH: (גְּדַלְָיָה) Jer 40:5, 8; 41:16; Zeph 1:1; Ezra 10:18; 
seals: DH* 135; DHL A6; MP 3.8; WSS 80, 119–20, 405, 409, 468 (?), 504.

Arad (ostracon) 22.1, Jerusalem (jar handle) 6 (גְּדַלְָיָה); Uza 4.7; BH: (גְּדַלְָיָה) 2 Kgs 25:22–25; Jer 38:1; 39:14; 40:6–16; 41:1–18; 43:6; 1 Chr 25:3, 9.
As noted in Chapter 2, the inscribed stone basin (*Kajr*1.2; cf. *Kajr*1.1, 1.3 and 1.4) has typically been described as a “votive” or “dedicatory” offering. However, in one sense, the term votive (from the Latin *vōtīvus*: performed, offered, etc., in consequence of a vow)\(^{1410}\) is unfortunate. That is, insofar as its association with a specific cultic act related to the enactment or fulfilment of a vow goes beyond the available evidence. Nevertheless, it is precisely in this sense that Dever sought to use the term; seeing this vessel, along with a number of other inscribed and uninscribed objects from ancient Israel, as strong circumstantial evidence for an ancient Israelite votive custom.\(^{1411}\) Be that as it may, it has been objected that, to date, none of the artefacts that are commonly identified as votive objects (including those from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud) explicitly mentions a vow


\(^{1411}\) Dever, *Did God have a Wife*, 162, 195–96, see also pp. 51, 115, 128, 138, 147, 188–89, 190–92, 193, 194.
And while Dever has rightly stressed that the highly contextualised and symbolic nature of a votive object means that it does not need to specify itself as such, in such equivocal cases it is prudent to opt for greater methodological caution by avoiding, as far as possible, leading terminology.

What is in question is not so much whether the ancient Israelites made votive offerings—the Hebrew Bible provides clear evidence that they did (e.g. Lev 7:16; 22:28; 22:21, 23; 23:38; Num 15:3; 29:39; Deut 12:6; 17)—but whether an object can be confidently identified as such without an explicit designation (i.e. in writing). Indeed, in the Hebrew Bible votive (ןֶדֶר) offerings are frequently mentioned in the same context as freewill (נְדָּבָּה) offerings, and it is evidently by their designated purpose rather than their material substance that they are differentiated. This fact alone should mandate considerable caution when attempting to classify an artefact as “votive”.

Notwithstanding this terminological distinction, the term votive is typically used broadly in ancient Near Eastern scholarship to refer to a range of dedicatory offerings. In this sense the essential function of Kajr1.2 appears, prima facie, to be related to that of ancient Near Eastern votive objects generally; that is, “taking the place of the suppliant, and relieving him of the need to proffer his prayer in his own person, orally

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1413 E.g. Lev 7:16; 22:28; 22:21, 23; 23:38; Num 15:3; 29:39; Deut 12:6; 17. The fact that these verses specify offerings of food and drink does not necessarily affect the interpretation of the basin. That the nature and substance of offerings could be more diverse can be inferred from the proscription in Deuteronomy 23:18, which explicitly prohibits the offering of the wages of a prostitute or a male prostitute (trans. NRSV; lit. כֶלֶב “of a dog”) in fulfilment of a vow. In any case, it is possible that the stone vessels also contained offerings. Furthermore, it cannot be presumed that the proscriptions laid out in Leviticus and Deuteronomy were representative of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud.

1414 However, see Lev. 22:23.
APPENDIX B: VOTIVES

and perpetually”. Thus, for example, a 7th century b.c.e. Assyrian inscription by Assurbanipal states: “I had a statue of me as king made (and) placed (it) before the gods to constantly request well-being for me”.

Accordingly, such benedictory inscriptions serve to do more than simply and directly communicate information to a human or divine audience (their denotative function); rather, they are profoundly caught up with ancient Near Eastern perceptions of the metaphysical dimensions of writing. In the case of the ancient Hebrews, the magical properties of writing may be glimpsed in the ritual for cursing a suspected adulteress (Num 5:11–31). Much has been written about this passage, and it is not necessary to go over it again here; for now it will suffice to note what this passage suggests about the transformative power inherent in the act of writing. That is to say, in this ritual it appears to be the material act of writing that actualises the curse and makes it efficacious. To this effect, it should be noted that although the act is accompanied by ritual invocations (Num 5:19–22), the affective power of the ritual is attributed to the המאררים “the water that brings the curse” (Num 5:22, 24), in which the priest had washed-off the written curses.

1416 Translation, with additional examples, by Tigay, “Priestly Reminder Stones”, 347, n.23. As Tigay has noted, in the Hebrew Bible a number of practices and objects are similarly described as serving as a reminder of the Israelites before God; Tigay, “Priestly Reminder Stones”, 339–342.
As Bilhah Nitzan has shown, in Hebrew literature blessings and curses are frequently counterpoised, suggesting that conceptually they were diametrically equivalent phenomena; consequently, what is true of the actualising power of writing in the ritual context of cursing, may reasonably be supposed to be true for blessing. That is, the physical manifestation of the blessing in the form of an inscription has a substantiating effect. And, for that reason, the medium upon which a blessing is inscribed also has profound significance.

In the case of Kajr1.2, the physical dimensions of the stone vessel emphasises its qualities of permanence and immutability; qualities that ensured that the benedictory invocation would remain materially and perpetually before the deity. However, the physicality of the invocation goes beyond the exigencies of vicariously placing the donor’s prayers before the deity. It may also be assumed that it served as a metaphysical safeguard for the donor, to ward against the perceived dangers of physically writing one’s name. In light of this, it is significant that the closest parallels for Kajr1.2 (both functionally and linguistically), the Kh. el-Qôm tomb inscription and the stonecutter inscription (§2.2.1), are likewise engraved in stone. This pattern is repeated again and again in other Hebrew blessing inscriptions, to the extent that even on votive seals and the possible offering bowls from Samaria, the text is incised into the fabric of the vessel rather than inked onto its surface. In this way, the

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1421 It should be noted that at least one example of a blessing written in ink is known, from a graffito written on the side of a monolithic column-shaped stalactite in a cave near En-Gedi (Bar-Adon, “An Early Hebrew Inscription in a Judean Desert Cave”, 226–32). However, even in this case, the remoteness of the inscription and the proportions of the stalactite on which it was written might still a deliberate and conscientious approach to the selection of writing surfaces.
words became integrated with the medium on which they are written and are not easily altered or effaced.

All of this reinforces the impression that the stone basin on which Kajr1.2 was inscribed was brought to Kuntillet 'Ajrud as a special act of piety. This, in turn, supports the view that Kuntillet 'Ajrud and its environs had extraordinary religious associations (cf. §4.8).
Appendix C

NOTES ON THE TEXT OF THE SOUTHERN THEOPHANY
PERICOPAE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

C.1. Deuteronomy 33:2–3:

2. YHWH comes from Sinai,
   And from Seir he dawns upon his people;\(^\text{12}\)
   He shines from Mount Paran,
   And he comes from the deserts of Kadesh.
   From his right (hand), streams (of light?) surround him.

3. Surely, O beloved among the nations,\(^\text{14}\)
   All his holy ones are in your hand,\(^\text{15}\)
They gather at your feet;\(^1\)
That they might be lifted up on account of you.\(^2\)

\(^1\)The MT and Sam. Pent. have the “archaic” 3.m.p. personal pronoun לְמֹלֹּם “to them”; however, LXX (ἡμῖν), Tg. Onq. (סֵאִי), Syr. (א), and Vulg. (nobis), witness the variant l.c.p. לְנָא, “to us”. Because of the different vowel quality represented by the \(m.l.\) (i.e. *ôl*û, respectively), it is difficult to account for this corruption on phonological grounds. Palaeographically, the confusion might be explained on the basis of the similarity between the \(mêm\) and \(nûn\) in the paleo-Hebrew script (and less easily the later square script). But in that case we would expect the \(m.l.\) to be differentiated orthographically (i.e. 3.m.s. = \(hê\); 1.c.p. = \(wāw\)); although, there is some evidence that in pre-exilic Hebrew orthography the 3.m.s. pronominal suffix (= Tiberian -ô) might occasionally be represented by \(wāw\): e.g. the crux וֹם “his companion” in the third line of the Siloam Tunnel Inscription (see the discussion in Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*).

An alternative restoration, which has gained some acceptance, is the hypothetical restoration לְעַמֶּה, “to his people” (cf. Tg. Ps.-J.; Tg. Neof. And the fragmentary Tgs.). According to this reading, the לְעַמֶּה shift might be explained by the quiescence of the guttural as is attested in post-exilic Hebrew (e.g. the frequent omission of ‟ayin in 1QIsa\(^a\)). However, this does not resolve the problem of the multiple witnesses to the first person plural; see, already, Arnold B. Erhlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches: Leviticus, Numeri and Deuteronomium* (vol.2 of *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches*; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche, 1909), 347; cf. Isaac L. Seeligman, “a Psalm from Pre-Regal Times,” *VT* 14 (1964): 75–92; Baruch Margulis,

2 In the MT אתה is pointed as a 3.m.s. perfect verb אָתָּה, “he came”. However, Sam. Pent., אתו; Tgs., ע(י)מיה; LXX, σὺν μυριάσιν καθής; and Vulg., et cum eo, attest אתו, “with him”. Emendation in favour of the preposition was initially supported by Frank Moore Cross Jr. and David Noel Freedman, Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry (Grand Rapids, Mi.: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 72, n.8; but, in a later essay Freedman revised his position, defending the MT’s reading on poetic grounds (see below); cf. David Noel Freedman, “The Poetic Structure of the Framework of Deuteronomy 33,” in The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon (eds. Gary Rendsburg, et al.; New York: Ktav: Institute of Hebrew Culture and Education of New York University, 1980), 38; cf. the earlier argument of Seeligman, “a Psalm from Pre-Regal Times”, 76. Owing to the difficulties present in the rest of the line, there is no a priori reason to prefer either witness, and the interpretation of אתה ultimately depends on interpretational choices concerning the subject of the colon as a whole.

3 The MT’s reading רבבות has also presented difficulty. Cross and Freedman, preferred to read the initial mem as an enclitic, רַבְּבֹת, and restored רִבְּבָּה, “multitude” (cf. 1 Sam 18:7); cf. Cross and Freedman, Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry, 72, n.8. This has the support of: LXX, μυριάσιν; Tg. Onq., רבבות; Tg. Neof., ראָיַה רבבות; Tg. Ps.-J., ראָי רבבות; Vulg., millia.; although note that 4QpaleoDeut has [רָבָּבות]. However, it has been objected that this interpretation disrupts the pattern of geographical references established in the first three cola, and this has given rise to a number of proposed emendations. Seeligman, “a Psalm from Pre-Regal Times”, 77,
emended the text to read, מְעַרְבָּתָה קָדָשׁ, “from the desert of Qadesh (sic.)” (cf. מדרב קדש; in the theophany of Ps 29:8); while others, following C. J. Ball, read, מְמַרְיָב קָדָשׁ, “from Meribat Kadesh”; cf. C. J. Ball, “The Blessing of Moses (Deut XXXIII)” Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology 18 (1896); Lars E. Axelsson, The Lord Rose up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah (Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 25; Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987), 49, esp. n.9. More recently, Tigay read “from Ribeboth-kodesh,” stating, “Ribeboth-kodesh, literally, “myriads of Kodesh,” must be the name of a place in the Negev or Sinai, like all the terms parallel to it”; Tigay, The JPD Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy, 320. The parallelism that such readings afford is certainly appealing, especially due to the geographical proximity of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud to Kadesh Barnea (cf. §4.1).

Further support for interpreting מֶּמ as the proposition comes from Freedman, who has observed that there is a fivefold repetition of the preposition (מ) in the five cola of Deut 33:2; cf. Freedman, “The Poetic Structure of the Framework of Deuteronomy 33”, 38. While it remains feasible to follow the MT in reading, “He came from myriad holy ones” (as, indeed, does Freedman), given the sequence of geographical references noted above, it is preferable to follow Seeligman and read מְעַרְבָּתָה קָדָשׁ, “from the deserts of Kadesh”. On the association of God with desert regions in the southern theophany tradition, compare Ps 68:4 [Heb. 5], where God is described as רכֹב נָהָר הָעֲרָבָּה (“(the one) who rides in the deserts”, and Ps 86:7 [Heb. 8] where he is said to march in the “wilderness” (שֵׁם). Compare also the prose narrative of Num 13:26, where Kadesh is explicitly associated with the “wilderness of Paran” (מדבר פארם).

Following Freedman’s observation about the fivefold repetition of the preposition (מ), it appears that the quatrain comprises two bicola, reflecting a centrifugal pattern, in which the deity is said to come first from a mountain
(viz. Sinai, Paran), and then, syndetically, from a wider geographical region
(viz. Seir, the deserts of Kadesh). But, unless Sinai and Paran are understood
to be same, God is said to come from two different mountains. Consequently,
the quatrain should probably be understood as an allusion to a region rather
than a specific location. Alternatively, Mount Paran might be understood as
synonymous with Mount Sinai; presumably taking its name from the region of
in which the mountain was situated (cf. מֶרֶן פַּארֶן,[1] "the wilderness of Paran",
Gen 14:6; Num 10:12; 12:16; 13:3, 26; 1 Sam 25:1). In that case the two
bicola should be interpreted as synonymous parallelism, and Paran, Seir, and
the deserts of Kadesh should be understood as different names for the same
general region (note that Seir and Paran are frequently associated: Gen 14:6;
Deut 1:1–2; 33:2; and possibly Hab 3:3, see n.28). According to 1 Kings
11:18, the region of Paran was west of Midian on the way to Egypt, which is
consistent with the equation of Seir with the fields of Edom (see n.26).
However, Numbers 10:12 militates against this interpretation: וַיַּעַסֵּם הָעָנָה מֵאָרֶן וַיִּכְבְּדֵם מֵאָרֶן מִן מֶרֶן פַּארֶן, "and the Israe
tites set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud settled in the wilderness of Paran".
Regardless, the coordination of these GNN raises the question of the location
of Mount Sinai. Based on the other place names in this verse, and
geographical references elsewhere in the southern theophany tradition (cf.
§2.8.2), it seems likely that Sinai should be located somewhere between the
Wadi Arabah and Kadesh Barnea (i.e. in the region of Edom), or perhaps
further south. However, this question is by now so fraught, that it is
impossible to untangle here.

Assuming the above, trebuie must also be interpreted as a geographical
designation. Nevertheless, the Tgs. (קדישין), evidently read קדיש as a
substantive, “the holy ones” (Tg. Neof. and Tg. Ps.-J.: “holy angels,” מַלַּאכֵי קדישין). This was followed by Cross and Freedman, who argued for original קדיש, suggesting that the mem was lost through haplography (Cross and
Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*, 72, n.9). However, it is also possible to read משלי, without emendation, as a collective noun (cf. Patrick D. Miller Jr., “Two Critical Notes on Psalm 68 and Deuteronomy 33,” *HTR* 57 (1964): 241, n.6).

The LXX has the mixed reading σὺν μυριάσιν καθῆς, in which משלי is not translated. However, the difficulty of this reading was evidently felt by later interpreters. In an apparently related passage, Jude 1:14, following Enoch 1:9, reads ἐν ἁγίας μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ, “with his holy myriads” (ἁγίος being the more usual translation of משלי in the LXX). Neither the LXX nor the Targumic witness can be accounted particularly authoritative. The ambiguity of the LXX attests to the confusion felt in the Greek tradition. While the Aramaic witness was apparently influenced by the belief that this verse alludes to the giving of the Law (see below).

On the tradition concerning the presence of angels at the giving of the Law, see Martin McNamara, *The Targum Neofiti 1: Deuteronomy: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible 5A; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 162, n.7).

5 מימינו may be translated “from his south,” as Freedman suggests. However, the unusual syntax of this colon finds a striking parallel in Habakkuk 3:4 (מימינו, “from his hand”), suggesting that מימינו should be translated “from his right (hand)”; cf. Wearne, *Reading Habakkuk 3:4 and Deuteronomy 33:2 in Light of One Another*, 1–10.

6 The crux אשדת has been accounted especially difficult. The MT (Qere) interpreted אשדת, as two words: אֵשַׁדָּת “fiery law.” This reading was followed by the Vulg. *in dextera eius ignea lex*, “in his right hand is a fiery law,” and the Tgs.: *Tg. Onq.*, “from the midst of the flaming fire he gave the Law, written by his right (hand)”; *Tg. Ps.-J.*, “the writing of his right (hand) and the Law, from within the flaming fire he gave them the
commandments”; *Tg. Neof.*, “and he stretched out his right hand from the midst of the flames of fire, and gave the Law to his people” (on the variant word order of some MSS of *Tg. Neof.*, see McNamara, *The Targum Neofiti 1: Deuteronomy*, 162, n.7). Sam. Pent. follows the MT, but writes דָּת as two words. The only witness to attest a different reading is the LXX, ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ, “On his right, his angels with him.” It is difficult to see how ἄγγελοι could be related to אֵשֶׁת, but presumably the solution is to be sought in מַעְרַחְת/מְרַחְת in the preceding colon (note the apparent confusion of the LXX at that point).

The difficulty with the MT’s reading, however, is that דָּת is apparently a Persian loanword and is, therefore, felt to be anachronistic in what scholarly consensus holds to be an Early Biblical Hebrew text (cf. the discussion in Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, 303–04, §11.5.6.2). Not surprisingly, this has given rise to numerous attempts at emendation. The most plausible suggestions include: Ball’s vocalization, אשדות, from the Syriac root אשד, “to pour, to stream,” which, as Ball noted, is commonly used to denote the pouring out of light; see Ball, “The Blessing of Moses (Deut xxxiii)”, 119; cf. Seeligman, who adopted this suggestion, but apparently merged it with the MT’s אש, translating “fiery stream”; see Seeligman, “a Psalm from Pre-Regal Times”, 77). Other proposals include, H. S. Nyberg’s restoration of the DN “Asherah”; see H. S. Nyberg, “Deuteronomion 33, 2–3,” *ZDMG* 92 (1938): 335; Cross and Freedmans’ emendation and redivision אָשֶׁר אֵלֶּה, which they translated “proceeded the mighty ones”; see Cross and Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*, 72, n.11 (cf. A. F. L. Beeston, “Angels in Deuteronomy,” *JTS* 2 (1951): 30–31; Miller, “Two Critical Notes on Psalm 68 and Deuteronomy 33”, 241–43); and Freedman’s, אשדות, “mountain slopes”, paralleling the geographical references in the preceding cola; see Freedman, “The Poetic Structure of the
Framework of Deuteronomy 33”, 39–41). Finally, Rendsburg has drawn attention to a possible Ugaritic cognate *išdym* in UT8 (= KTU 1.45), a mythological text apparently dealing with the sun goddess Špš; see Gary Rendsburg, “Hebrew ‘šdt and Ugaritic išdym,” *JNSL* 8 (1980):81–84). As Rensburg notes, the similar structure and solar imagery apparently common to both Deut 33:2 and KTU 1.45 “are too close to be accidental”; see Rendsburg, “Hebrew ‘šdt and Ugaritic išdym”, 83.

More decisive, still, is the apparently identical syntax of Hab 3:4, which, based on the context, should probably be understood to refer to some sort of luminosity or radiance. The pairing of the prepositions ל and מ(ן), and the absence of a verb in both verses, is unusual, and it is difficult to see how this awkward syntax might have entered the text through the error of a copyist; for a more detailed discussion see Wearne, “קרנים מידו and לϡדת֯למו: Reading Habakkuk 3:4 and Deuteronomy 33:2 in Light of One Another”, 1–10. Furthermore, based on the similarities of Hab 3:4 and KTU 1.45, and the presence of the verbs רזח and הופיה in the preceding cola, some sort of luminary imagery is appropriate in Deut 33:2. Consequently, I follow Ball’s אושד √אשדת֯למו, “streams (of light).”

7 The MT has לם (cf. *Tg. Onq.*, לָם, “to us”; *Tg. Ps.-J.*, לָם, “to them”; *Tg. Neof.*, לָם, and perhaps the LXX, μετὰ αὐτόν, “with him”). However, if this colon is understood to contain an idiomatic expression analogous to Hab 3:4, then it may be preferable to restore ל and treat לם as dittography from the second colon; see Wearne, “קרנים מידו and לϡדת֯למו: Reading Habakkuk 3:4 and Deuteronomy 33:2 in Light of One Another”, 9.

8 The *hapax* verb חобще, pointed in the MT as a *qal* active participle, is usually associated with Aram. חבע, “to love, to burn,” (cf. Arab. حب, “to love, care for”); cf. *Tg. Jon.*, 2 Sam 1:26, where the *pe‘il* verb חביבת is used to translate נאם, “was dear to.”
Alternatively, Cassuto proposed that חָּבֵב be understood as a polel perfect (compare the PN חָּבָּב, “the beloved,” which is apparently derived from the polal form of the verb), and read עמו with the LXX (τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ), rather than עמים. Cassuto went even further, however, and suggested that it might be preferable to restore חָּבוּב and עלך, in order to better harmonise this colon with בִּרְדְךָ in the next colon. Accordingly, he translated the line, “And ‘Thou dost’ love ‘Thy’ people”; see Cassuto, “Deuteronomy XXXIII and the New Year in Ancient Israel”, 51. However, while Cassuto’s proposed emendation does succeed in harmonising the two cola, it has no support in the textual witnesses.

Then again, Cross, following George Mendenhall, suggested an Akkadian cognate, ebēbu “to be pure” (CAD IV, E, (Chicago: Oriental Institute Chicago, 1958), 4–8), and translated the line: “Yea, the purified of the peoples”; see Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 101–02, n. 38; cf. Miller, “Two Critical Notes on Psalm 68 and Deuteronomy 33”, 243. But, as noted by Cross, in that case, we would expect a stative participle plural; cf. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 102, n. 38.

The LXX translation ἐφείσατο, “he spared,” sheds no light on this question. However, in Hab 3:4 the LXX translated the ħapax חָּבָּא with the improbable, ἀγάπησιν, “love” (see below), and it therefore seems that the translator(s) of LXX Habakkuk, at least, recognised a connection between Deut 33:2 and Hab 3:4. And this might offer indirect evidence that the received text of Deut 33:2 was understood in terms of חָּבֵב, “to love”.

The plene spelling of the Sam. Pent. (חָּבֵב) supports the MT’s vocalisation as a qal active participle. However, for internal reasons it is also theoretically possible to restore the passive participle חָּבוּב, “beloved” (see n.14, above). Admittedly, defective spellings are comparatively uncommon for qal passive participles in the MT, but they are not unknown (cf. כָּפֵס and חָּפֵס in Deut 32:34). According to the statistical analysis by Andersen and Forbes, defective

9 HALOT identifies the *hapax legomenon* הֶדְמַחְרָה הָקְרָה as the puʾal impf. of הָמְחַר, “crowd together.” Alternatively, Cross and Freedman suggested הַמָּטָכָה, a reflexive infixed-i form from מָטָכָה, מְטָכָה, מְטְכָה, “to bend, to be low or humiliated.” This root is known from Heb., Aram., Arab., and Ug., and suits the context well (Cross and Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*, 73, n.16). However, Margulis objected that this form is unparalleled, even in Job 24:24, despite very similar syntax; see Margulis, “Gen. XLIX 10/Deut. XXXIII 2-3: A New Look at Old Problems”, 206 (although, note that Margulis understood the form in Deut 33:3 to be passive, as in Job 24:24, while Cross and Freedman translated Deut 33:3 as active).


11 If דברתיך is derived from דָּבָּר, as is commonly assumed, then we would expect the usual masculine plural suffix (דְּבָּרִים). Cassuto understood דברתיך to be a qâṭṭil form corresponding to the piʿel of דבר, with the feminine plural suffix, noting that the feminine form דִבְּרוֹת is attested in later Hebrew; see Cassuto, “Deuteronomy XXXIII and the New Year in Ancient Israel”, 52. Some such reading is apparently assumed by the LXX, καὶ ἐδέξατο ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ νόμον, “and accepted from his words a law,” Tg. Neof., על פא דבורי, “according to his commandments,” and Vulg., *accipiente de doctrina illius*, “receiving his teaching”.
A
PPENDIX
C:
OTES ON
TEXT OF THE
SOUTHERN
THEOPHANY
PERICOPAE

An alternative possibility is that דִּבְּרָּה is derived from the less common noun דִּבְרָּה, which in Job 5:8 seems to denote a “(legal) cause”. Elsewhere דִּבְרָּה is used with the sense “on account of” (Ps 110:4; Eccl 3:18; 7:14; 8:2). If דִּבְרָּה is understood in the latter sense, it might be better to restore a passive conjugation and interpret מ(ן) with a causal nuance (see Williams §319; GKC §119z; cf. JM §133e): שָּאְנֵי מְדִבְרָתֶיךָ, “they (his holy ones) will be lifted up on account of you” (cf. Job 5:8).

Whatever the case, as Gaster suggested, the asyndetic imperfect seems to indicate purpose or immediate consequence: i.e. “in order that they might lift up/be lifted up” (Gaster, “An Ancient Eulogy on Israel: Deuteronomy 33:3–5, 26–29”, 58).

Of the 18 occurrences of the verb רָאָה in the Hebrew Bible, 13 explicitly refer to the sunrise. Ps 112:4 refers to “light” (אור) and the two occurrences in Isa 60:1–2 refer to God’s glory (כבד, paralleled in the same verses with “light” אור and contrasted with “darkness” חשך). 2 Chron 26:19 is less clear, as the verb (metaphorically) refers to the outbreak of leprosy on the forehead of king Uzziah. Nevertheless, the imagery in Deut 33:2 is undoubtedly of YHWH “shining forth” like the sunrise.

Bernard Grossfeld has drawn attention to the transformation in Tg. Onq. of the anthropomorphic expression “He shone upon them” by the substitution of the active verb רָאָה with its related noun “the splendor of his glory” along with the passive verb “appeared”; Bernard Grossfeld, The Targum Onqelos to Deuteronomy: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes (The Aramaic Bible 9; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 102.

The sentiment is difficult to comprehend. As Tigay observed, “If this refers to God, it is a surprisingly universalistic statement for a poem about His protection of Israel” (Tigay, The JPD Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy, 320–21). Consequently, it may be better to follow the Targums
in interpreting עמים as a reference to the tribes of Israel. (cf. Gen 28:3; Judg 5:14).

However, it is also possible that נב֯עמים is a noun-phrase, “beloved among the nations”, referring to Israel (see below).

15 The difficulty with this colon was well expressed by Margulis: “The problem is one of antecedents: whose ‘holy ones’ and whose ‘hands’?”; see Margulis, “Gen. XLIX 10/Deut. XXXIII 2-3: A New Look at Old Problems”, 206. The NRSV has surmounted this problem by translating the preceding colon: “Indeed, O favourite among peoples,” whereby, נב֯עמים is treated as a noun-phrase, apparently referring to the nation of Israel. Accordingly, the קדשיו may be understood to be “(God’s) holy ones,” and the ידך may be understood to be “(Israel’s) hands.” The NRSV’s translation is appealing, insofar as it allows for a harmonised reading of the whole verse with minimal emendation. The change from the third person description of the theophany to the second person address to the nation is appropriate in the literary context of Moses’ blessing of the people.


The imagery is apparently of submissiveness. In the Hebrew Bible, when the expression בְּעֵיתֶךָ is used of animate objects it often denotes the subjugation of one party to another, e.g. Josh 9:25, וַנַּחֲנוּ בְּנַרְךָ נֵסֶם וְקֶשֶׁר, "and now, behold, we are in your hand; deal with us as seems good and proper in your eyes”; Ps 31:15, בְּעֵיתֶךָ עָצַלְתִּי מְדִיאוֹרֵי, "my times are in your hand; deliver me form the hand of my enemies and persecutors” (cf. Job 12:10; Ps 95:4; Jer 26:14); while, in the next colon, רַאֶ, apparently conveys the sense of doing obeisance. The sentiment may,
therefore, be expressed, “his holy ones submit themselves (or are submitted)
to you in every way.” Although, note the wordplay between רֶגֶל and יָ֯שַ֯א.

17 The theology assumed by this verse is complicated. קדשיו, “his holy ones”,
seems to refer to the divine assembly (cf. Cross and Freedman, Studies in
Ancient Yahwistic Poetry, 74–75, n.19); compare the expression, קדשׁ עלִי אלהים,
“holy one above the gods,” in Kajr4.2. But, if so, Deut 33:3 seems to imply
that Israel, identified as the “beloved among the nations”, is hierarchically
superior to the קדשים. This apparently stands in contrast to Ps 8:5, in which the
Psalmist declares, והحضرהו מְשַׁאֵלָהוָם וּכְבוֹדָו וּהָדָרָו וְעָטַ֥רוּוֹ “you have made him
(man) lower than the gods (LXX: ἀγγέλους, “angels”), you have crowned him
with glory and honour”; or, “you have made them a little lower than God”
(NRSV). However, Eugene Merrill has recently argued that the implicit
hierarchy of Deut 33:3 is, in fact, reflected consistently throughout biblical
theology:

“The case has been made that God created man precisely so that man
could function as a vice-regent. But the role of angels, who are
presented as superhuman beings if not divine, cannot be overlooked.
All evidence suggests that despite their exalted status angels do not
enjoy a role superior to that of mankind; but, in fact, they were created
to serve the human race in ways both known and unknown. This is
seen in the narrative texts surveyed above, and it is explicitly affirmed
in the fullness of God’s revelation (Ps 91:11; cf. Ps 34:7; Isa 37:36;
Acts 5:19; 12:8).” (Eugene H. Merrill, Everlasting Dominion: A
Theology of the Old Testament (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman &
Holman, 2006): 146).
C.2. Judges 5:4–5

4. O YHWH!

When you came\textsuperscript{25} from Seir,
when you marched from the land of Edom,\textsuperscript{26}
the earth shook,
yea, the heavens dripped,
yea, the clouds dripped water.

5. The mountains flowed
from before YHWH,\textsuperscript{27}
the One of Sinai,
from before YHWH,
the God of Israel

\textsuperscript{18} Note the use of a preposition with the infinitive, to express temporality as in *Kajr4.2* (cf. GKC §114e).
The nominal form (צְּעָּדָּה) of this verb is apparently used with the sense of God’s marching in 2 Sam 5:24; 1 Chron 14:15.

Note the verb √רעש, describing an earthquake, as in Kajr4.2.

גם might be related to Ugaritic g “thunder” (cf. Mitchell Dahood, Psalms I:1–50: Introduction, Translation and Notes (AB 16; New York: Doubleday, 1965), 155–56, n. 25:3; idem., Psalms II:51–100: Introduction, Translation and Notes (AB 17; New York: Doubleday, 1968), 14, n. 52:7; idem, Psalms III:101–50: Introduction, Translation and Notes with Appendix The Grammar of the Psalter (AB 17A; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 269–70, n. 137:1; see also del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language, 290). However, in other biblical theophanies the noun denoting thunder is קול (e.g. Exod 19:16; Ps 29 passim, etc.). Moreover, the asseverative particle ĝמ makes good idiomatic sense in the context (cf. אַף in Ps 68:7 [Heb. 8]).

LXXA reads ἐξεστάθη “amazed, astonished”; OG ἑταράχθη “was stirred up, in commotion.” Consequently BHS proposes the emendation וּנָּמוֹג (√מוג “melt”) or וּנָּמוֹט (√מוט “totter, shake, slip”), paralleling וּלּנזֹ in the next verse; however, וּנָּטְּפ וּנָּטְּפ (to drip) is appropriate in the context (cf. LXXB ἔσταξαν: “trickle, stream, pour down”; Vulg. *distillaverunt aquis*, “dripped water”). Tg. Jon. has מכה, מライフ מライフ Más


The LXX (τούτο Σινά), Tg. Jon. (דְרַע ספר אַתְרִיק) and Vulg. (et Sinai) apparently understood זָהֲנֵסִיני to be a gloss identifying the mountains referred to in the preceding colon (cf. the BHS textual note), and this reading has recently received renewed support. Indeed, Serge Frolov has argued that this was also apparently how the Masoretes interpreted the verse when they placed the disjunctive atnach under יְהוָה, separating זָהֲנֵסִיני from the tetragrammaton; Serge Frolov, “How Old is the Song of Deborah?” JSOT 36 (2011): 166. However, in the parallel phrase in Ps 68:9 (which Frolov believes to be earlier) the atnach stands after the formula אֱלֹהִים זָהֲנֵסִיני. This variation is not mitigated by Frolov’s suggestion that גם עבים...מפני יְהוָה in Judges 5 is an interpolation. Rather, he simply pushes the question back onto Psalm 68; cf. Serge Frolov, “How Old is the Song of Deborah?”, 166–67, n.9.

A more compelling objection was raised by Michael Fishbane, who also argued for the priority of Psalm 68. Rejecting Albright’s (apparently despairing) proposal that Psalm 68 was simply a catalogue of incipits, Fishbane argued instead that Ps 68:8–9 may be related to the wilderness
wanderings and the theophany on Mt. Sinai. As such, Fishbane suggested that
the specifying interpolation זְהָ סִינִי was added by a later glossator in order
to identify the earthquake of Ps 68:9 more clearly with the Sinai theophany in
Exodus 19:18; see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 54–55, 75, n.193). This may be correct, and
the association of biblical theophanies with the Sinai theophany is certainly a
tendenz in the targums; however, earthquake imagery is commonplace in both
biblical and extra-biblical theophanies (see §2.8.1), and, given the
geographical references in the other southern theophanies, there is no
evidence that זְהָ סִינִי is an interpolation. In fact, its authenticity is virtually
assured on structural grounds. That is, if זְהָ סִינִי is read as an epithet, parallel
אָלֶהיִּ֠ירָאֵל then the stanza has a balanced structure: a b bʹ // c d dʹ // e f fʹ.

25 יצָא is usually felt to have militaristic connotations, with the sense of
marching into battle (cf. Deut 20:1; 1 Sam 8:20; 1 Sam 21:6, etc.). As Barry
Webb notes, the verb יצָא is paralleled in Deborah’s rhetorical question in
Judges 4:14, הָלָּא יְהוָ֣ה יֵֽיצָ֔א פָּנֵיכָ֖ם “has not YHWH gone before you?”; Barry G.
Webb, *The Book of Judges* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mi.: William B.
Eerdmans, 2012), 199. However, יצָא is sometimes used of the sun or other
celestial bodies (cf. Gen 19:23; Judg 5:31; Isa 13:10), and it is possible that
this verse may also contain echoes of the solar imagery that seems to permeate
the theophany tradition; cf. Francis Anderson’s discussion of בָּא in Hab 3:3;
Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and
Commentary* (AB 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 290–91. But, if so, this
connotation is not foregrounded by the poet. Nevertheless, the verb יצָא meaning “sunrise” is repeated in Judg 5:31:
כָּנָּנֶהוּ כָּלַאֲרוֹרְךָ יְהוָּה וָאַמְלָחִי מֶנְאָ֔הְתָּ, “may all your enemies perish thus, O YHWH! But may
those who love him be like the sun as it rises in its might!”; cf. Robert G.
Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, (AB 6A; New
York: Doubleday, 1969), 116, who likened the imagery to a sunburst after a storm.

26 “Seir” and “the field(s) of Edom” are a matched pair; cf. Gen 32:3: ירשא ויעשה מלאכים לפני אדום שעיר שדה, “and Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau, in the land of Seir, in the field of Edom.”

27 The imagery is of nature recoiling from before the divine presence, rather than of the elements participating in the conflict (pace Boling, Judges: Introduction, Translation and Commentary, 108).
C.3. Psalm 68:7–8 [Heb.68:8–9]:

7. O God!28
   When you go forth before your people,
   When you march through the wilderness;29
   selah

8. The earth shakes,
   Yea, the heavens drip,
   From before God,
   The one of Sinai;
   From before God,
   The God of Israel

28 Note that Judg 5:4 uses the tetragrammaton, rather than אלהים. Zevit has posed the provocative suggestion that the Elohist Psalter (Pss 42–83, characterised by the use of the divine name Elohim and the avoidance of the
tetragrammaton) reflects a drawing together of religious traditions from a time before the establishment of monotheistic orthodoxy in Judah. According to Zevit, wherever אלהים functions as a divine name in these Psalms it replaces the name of some other deity; Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 681–84.

This suggestion might be correct, as far as it goes, but it is too simplistic. Given that in Ps 68:7 it is, in fact, the tetragrammaton that is replaced with the divine name Elohim, the harmonisation reflected in the Elohist Psalter should be understood as a response to a wider range of heterodox beliefs, than that envisaged by Zevit.

29 Note the generalisation: “wilderness” (בַּשְׂרָי), rather than Edom/Seir in Judg 5:4.
C.4. *Habakkuk 3:1–19*

*There is a general consensus that the hymn in Habakkuk 3 is a composite work comprising at least two originally separate compositions (see below). However, in its final form the hymn effectively amounts to an extended theophany, and, as such, it will be treated in full.*

1. על שנותך
2. יוהו שמתי משמע
3. ראתי יוהו פעלך
4. בקרב שנינו ותיהו
5. בקרב שנינו ותודיע
6. בין רוח תפוכר

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ופהלת

30. הקדוש מזרחי
31. כסה שמיים ותוד
32. הנחתהannelah האוהיל
33. עמד ומזרחי
34. לפניו ילך דבר
35. והוא רואה את רוח
36. עמד ו.getSelectedItem
37. וראה והwordpress
38. והphinsטו והريسינן
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shall be renewed upon the earth

7 the work of your hands.

and the light of your teaching is lighted up in your name.

8 the rivers of thy salvation.

9 they pass through the waters.

10 the waters of your streams.

11 they come and go.

12 they run and they turn.

13 their source is from the holy mountain.
1. A Prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet; according to Shigynoth

2. YHWH! I heard the report of you.

       I was frightened, YHWH, by your deed.
In (our) midst once more, by the life of YWHW,  
in (our) midst, once more, you did reveal,  
in (my) distress you did proclaim (your name)—
compassionate.  

3. Eloah comes from Teman;  
   and the holy one from Mount Paran.  
   
   selah  
   His majesty covers the heavens,  
   and his praises fill the earth.  

4. And (his) glory is like light;  
   Radiance from his hand surrounds him;  
   and there is his glorious veil.  

5. Deber goes before him,  
   and Resheph comes at his feet.  

6. He stops and measures the earth;  
   he looks and makes the nations tremble.  
The eternal mountains are shattered;  
   the ancient hills bow down.  
The ancient orbits (lit. pathways) are his.  

7. As punishment for sin I saw  
   the tents of Cushan shake;  
   tent curtains of the land of Midian.  

8. Was it against the rivers, O YHWH, that it burned?  
   Was your anger against the rivers?  
   Was your rage against the sea?  
   When you rode upon your horses,
9. Your bow is unsheathed;\textsuperscript{49}
    seven weapons\textsuperscript{50} you bring to view.

10. The land of rivers is torn asunder;\textsuperscript{51}
    the mountains\textsuperscript{52} see you and writhe.
    A flood of water passes by;
    the deep gives forth its voice;
    the heights lift up their hands;\textsuperscript{53}

11. the sun (and) the moon stand still in their dwelling place;
    At the light of your arrows passing by;
    at the brightness of your shaft of lightning.

12. In rage you tread the earth;
    in anger you thresh the nations.

13. You come forth for the salvation of your people;
    for the salvation of your anointed one.
    You smite the head from the wicked house;\textsuperscript{54}
    exposing it from foundation to neck.\textsuperscript{55}

14. You pierce with his own weapon the heads of his warriors;\textsuperscript{56}
    they storm to scatter me.
    He lifts them up, as though to devour the poor in hiding.\textsuperscript{57}

15. You trample the sea with your horses;
    foaming the mighty waters.\textsuperscript{58}

16. I hear and my bowels tremble;
my lips quiver at the sound.
Rottenness enters my bones,
and my steps tremble beneath me,
as I wait for the day of trouble
to come upon the people who attack us.

17. For the fig tree does not sprout,
and there is no fruit on the vine;
the produce of the olive tree fails,
and the field does not produce food;
the sheep are cut off from the fold,
and the cattle are not in the stall.

18. But I will rejoice in the YHWH,
I will rejoice in the god of my salvation.

19. YHWH my lord is my strength;
he set my feet like does, and he made me tread on my high places.

For the overseer with stings

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30 The LXX has the obscure reading: ἐξ ὄρους κατασκίου δασέος, “from the shady, bushy mountain”. However, δασός, “bushy”, can also mean “hairy”, and is used with that sense to describe Esau (Gen 25:25; 27:11, 23) and Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8). Consequently, one wonders whether the vorlage of LXX Habakkuk may have named שעיר, “Seir”, rather than Paran (cf. שיער, Deut 33:2). As Heibert observed, “the unusual interpretative character of
the translation suggests an attempt on the part of the translator to clarify a geographical term which was not understood”; see Theodore Heibert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3*, (HSM 38; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1986), 16.

31 Note that heaven and earth are paralleled, as are Teman and Paran. In both bicola, the second colon is linked by conjunctive ́ (cf. Deut 33:2).

32 This is the only occurrence of the definite article in the whole of the poem.

33 The MT has the polel verb, נודא. Godfrey Driver proposed an Arabic cognate: مادلأ, “became soft, quivered, shook” (modernَ); see Godfrey R. Driver, “Hebrew Notes,” ZAW 55 (1934): 54–55. This yields the translation, “he stopped and shook the earth”, which is reflected in both the LXX, ἐσαλεύθη, “was shaken”, and Tg. Jon., אזיע, “shook”. However, Barb. (διεμέτρησε), and Vulg. (*mensus*) presuppose the geminate root √מדד, “to measure”, which may be a metaphor of divine supremacy; cf. Isa 40:12, מי־מדדבשעלו֯מים֯ושמים֯בזרת֯תכן “, who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and counted out the heavens with the span?” Syr. has the inexplicable, ܘܡܫܚܗ “, anointed.”


34 Commentators have tended to see a major thematic division between v.7 and v.8, so that vv.3–7 and vv.8–15 are each treated as discrete literary units. As such, vv.3–7 are understood to contain the theophany proper, while vv.8–
15 are seen to reflect a Hebrew counterpart to the Canaanite Chaokskampf motif; cf. Umburto Cassuto, “Chapter iii of Habakkuk and the Ras Shamra Texts,” in Bible and Ancient Oriental Texts, (trans. Israel Abrahams; vol. 2 of Biblical and Oriental Studies, Umburto Cassuto; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 3–15. This structural division has left a lasting impression on subsequent treatments of Habakkuk 3; see the discussion in David T. Tsumura, “Ugaritic Poetry and Habakkuk 3,” TynBul 40 (1989): 24–48). However, the nature of the relationship between these units is debated. Heibert, for example, was inclined to see the stanzas as integrally linked; Theodore Heibert, God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3, (HSM 38; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 1986), 59–60, 68–76, and on the overall literary unity of Hab 3, see 76–80. While Andersen went so far as to describe vv.8–15 as an originally separate composition; Francis I. Andersen, Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 313–14.

Perhaps the most detailed argument in favour of a division between v.7 and v.8 is Heibert’s structural analysis, which identified a balanced A B C D C’ B’ A’ envelope construction in vv.3–7; see Heibert, God of My Victory, 69. However, this schematisation may be distorted. Heibert’s reluctance to translate the difficult v.4 led him to separate the colon in v.4a from the cola in v.4b–c. But, as I have argued elsewhere (Wearne, "קרנסים ומדים: קרנסים ומדים ולפי מימינו אשדות़ ומדים Reading Habakkuk 3:4 and Deuteronomy 33:2 in Light of One Another", 2), v.4 should properly be interpreted as a tricolon with its own envelope structure. Hence, Heibert’s subdivision of the verse led him to restore an artificial symmetry in the stanza. This is a problem, as the symmetry of the stanza was central to his argument: “[t]he central literary feature of this stanza is its perfect cyclic, inclusive structure…the opening and closing bicola of Stanza II (A, A’) correspond to one another at almost every possible level. They are metrically alike (1:1), and their verse structure
is nearly identical…Verse units B and B’ which form a concentric circle within the opening and closing bicola (A, A’) show many similarities as well. They are metrically alike tricola (1:1:1, 1:1:1).” (Heibert, God of My Victory, 69–70)

Nevertheless, the case for a division between v.7 and v.8 is supported by the setumah at the end of v.7 in MT\(^L\) (although this is omitted in MT\(^A\)). Peau included a corresponding setumah in his transcription of Mur 88 (= Mur XII), and, indeed, there seems to be a *vacat*, equivalent to about five letters, at the beginning of the line. This can be seen quite clearly in the recently published digital edition, and confirms the antiquity of the unit division (cited 4 September 2013; online: http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-281192).

Andersen noted the remarkable omission of the conjunction throughout vv.8–15, which might support the hypothesis that these verses originally belonged to an independent composition; Andersen, Habakkuk, 314. Although, this is not a sure sign of multiple authorship.

35 Freedman identified מַרְכָּבְתיך֯יִשְׁעֹעַ as a broken construct chain, in which the pronominal suffix is affixed to the construct rather than the absolute noun. According to Freedman, “the reason for this unusual but effective variation is probably to be found in the association of *mrkbtys* and the preceding *swsyk*, as coordinate elements in the compound phrase introduced by ‘l and controlled by *yšw ’h*”; David Noel Freedman, “The Broken Construct chain,” in Pottery, Poetry and Prophecy: Studies in Early Hebrew poetry (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 339–342, esp. 340.

36 The MT of v.9b consists of three nouns, all in the absolute state (שְׁבֻעוֹת מַטּוֹת אֹמֶר). This can hardly be original. But attempts at emendation are hampered by the baffling array of possible semantic and syntactic combinations; see the discussion in Andersen, Habakkuk, 320–25. The reconstruction here follows Andersen in viewing שְׁבֻעוֹת as a feminine plural form of the numeral “seven”
(cf. LXX ἐπὶ τὰ which may derive from εἰπτά; Heibert, God of My Victory, 27), and emending וֹרָפָא to the 2.m.s. וֹרָפָא, with the rare acceptation “to see”; Andersen, Habakkuk, 320–25; cf. James Barr, Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 322, n.31).

As with the setumah above (§C.4, n.32), the parashah petua is attested in MT but not in MT. In Mur 88 (= Mur XII) there is a clear vacat after סלה in line 15—with a space corresponding to about one line in depth—before the text resumes at the beginning of Hab 3:14 (cf. P. Benoit, J.T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, Les Grottes de Murabbaʻát (DJD II; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), pl. LXIX; see also the digital edition, cited 2 September 2013; online: http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-281192). A corresponding break is also indicated in 8Ḥev1 (= 8ḤevXII gr), col. 19; see Emanuel Tov, R. A. Kraft and P. J. Parsons, The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever (8ḤevXIIgr): The Seiyāl Collection I (DJD VIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pl. XIII.

According to Gert Prinsloo, the following verses (Hab 3:14–19) may be interpreted as a discrete unit which first echoes language and imagery from earlier sections of the poem before culminating in a confessional statement of unconditional trust in YHWH; Gert T. M. Prinsloo, “Reading Habakkuk 3 in Light of Ancient Unit Delimiters,” HTS Theological Studies 69 (2013): 1–11, esp. 7.

Andersen, Habakkuk, 338, suggested that the wāw suffix, pointed as a 3.m.s. in the MT, might be understood as a dual (cf. the apparently dual suffix י- in the Gezer Calendar). However, as he was unable to corroborate this suggestion with any additional examples of the dual wāw suffix, it is best to follow the MT.

Emending רָפָא to רָפַי, “my steps”; cf. Andersen, Habakkuk, 273, 345.

This verse admits no easy interpretation. The translation here follows that of Andersen, Habakkuk, 273, 283.
Andersen has argued that, here, the verb בוא has solar connotations (Andersen, Habakkuk, 290–92). Regarding the imagery, Andersen notes, “[w]ith the image of the sunrise, the perspective of Hab 3:3 is that of a resident of the Negeb or farther south. It describes the progress of Yahweh from the east westward, not a march from the south northward”; Andersen, Habakkuk, 292. Note, however, the imagery can readily be understood as figurative, and there is no indication that it need be interpreted literally. Compare Deut 33:2, which is situated in Moab, at least in its literary context (cf. Deut 34:1), but also uses the metaphor of the sunrise to describe the approach of Yahweh from the south, with no apparent sense of contradiction. Although, note that in the case of Kuntillet ʿAjrud (Kajr4.2), Andersen’s observation is demonstrably true (see §4.7).

The LXX translates תימן with the GN θαιμαν; however, Barb. (λιβός); Theod. (φωτεινός); Tg. Jon. (דרומא); and Vulg. (austro), apparently interpreted תימן as a general designation for the south (cf. §2.4.2). As noted above, the geographical references in Deut 33:2 follow a centrifugal pattern, in which a specific mountain is named and then a wider region. This verse seems to adopt the corresponding centripetal pattern (cf. Jeremiah 49:7, in which “Teman” is a synecdoche for the lands of Edom).

Note the substantive קדוש, “holy one,” (cf. Kajr4.2; and קדשיו, Deut 33:3).

See Wearne, “קרנים מידיו and מימינו אשדתPAL Reading Habakkuk 3:4 and Deuteronomy 33:2 in Light of One Another”, 1–10.

The imagery is of a divine retinue; cf. KTU 1.5 v, lines 6–13 (see §2.8.1). For a discussion of the ancient Near Eastern deities Deber and Resheph—associated, among other things, with pestilence and plague—see Edward Lipiński, Resheph: A Syro-Canaanite Deity (OLA 181; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), esp. 239–48.

Following Albright, who argued that הלכת corresponds to Akkad. alaktu and Ug. hlkt, which are used of the orbits of the stars (cf. Judg 5:20, which

Assuming this is correct, the verse employs a merism of heaven and earth corresponding to, and elaborating on, that in the Hab3.3. Note also the progressive elevation of the frames of reference, so that first the earth and the nations, followed by the mountain heights, and finally the celestial orbits are named. A similar pattern occurs in Hab 3:10–11; cf. Wearne, “Habakkuk 3:10–11: In Defence of a Masoretic Unit Division”, 515–18).

47 Following Albright, Andersen separated תֵחָּתֶאָן, “under trouble, iniquity(?)” from the following colon; although he notes that “the division does not match the Masoretic punctuation, which has zaqef gadol on ‘iniquity’”; Andersen, Habakkuk, 283, 310–11. Yet, the placement of the atnach in the MT suggests that the Masoretic tradition understood תֵחָּתֶאָן to be a unit.

The impulse to separate תֵחָּתֶאָן and read them with the preceding colon stems in part from the ambiguity of the expression, and in part from the observation that the repetition of עולם leads one to expect a tricolon, lest v.6b be unmatched; cf. Andersen, Habakkuk, 310–11; pace William A. Irwin, “The Psalm of Habakkuk” JNES 1 (1942): 23. Following Albright, it has, therefore, been common to emend this colon in order to supply a verb parallel to שחח in the preceding colon. Thus, Albright redivided the MT’s תֵחָּתֶאָן to תֵחָּהָאָן (vocalized: תֵחָּהָאָן, HALOT; הָאָהָאָה, “to destroy,” which is known in Akkad., Ug., and Arab.), with emphatic ל; Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk”, 14, n.u; cf. W. F. Albright, “Two Letters from Ugarit (Ras Shamrah)”, 49, and n.40).
However, recognition of the merism in preceding verse allays the need for emendation on structural grounds. In fact, the repetition of שְׂדָם in the fourth and fifth cola suggests that Hab 3:6 should be interpreted as a quintrain or pentacolon. The same structure—consisting of two parallel bicola followed by a fifth colon—can be recognised in Deut 33:2 (above), and Hab 3:3b–4. It is, therefore, tempting to supply a disjunctive in translation, in order to clarify the implicit contrast between the fifth colon and the preceding bicola: i.e. “he stops and shakes the earth; he looks and makes the nations tremble. The eternal mountains are shattered; the ancient hills bow down. But the heavenly orbits are his.”

Returning to Hab 3:7, it is interesting to note that LXX, ἀντὶ κόσμου εἴδον, “because of troubles,” and Vulg., pro iniquitate, “because of iniquity,” follow the MT in interpreting תַחַת און with the subsequent colon. However, Barb., αὐτὸν ἔνοχον σεισθῆσεται ἡ οἰκουμένη, “on his account the inhabited world will quake,” seems to relate תַחַת און to the preceding verse; cf. Edwin M. Good, “The Barberini Greek Version of Habakkuk III,” VT 9 (1959): 14, nn.8–9. While Tg. Jon. has the theologising, כד פלחה בית ירושalam לשותא מסתרה תומ, “when the house of Israel served idols I gave them into the hand of Cushan the wicked”; cf. Robert P. Gordon and K. J. Cathcart, The Targum of the Minor Prophets: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus and Notes (The Aramaic Bible 14; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 158, n.33. Each of these readings, with the possible exception of Barb., either directly or indirectly supports תַחַת און in the MT.

The translation above follows Wilhelm Rudolph in interpreting תַחַת און as prepositional: i.e. “on account of”; Wilhelm Rudolph, Micha, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephania (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1975), 231. Accordingly, תַחַת און is understood as an example of enjambment, in which the meaning of the line runs-over from the first colon to the second. Despite the fact that enjambment is not typical of Habakkuk 3 (although cf.

The remainder of the verse follows Heibert in interpreting the verb ירגזון, “to shake”, with אהליכושן, despite the fact that there is an attnach beneath כושן in the MT; Heibert, *God of My Victory*, 22–23, n.26; cf. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Habakuk* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1906), 81–82. As Heibert noted, this redivision recommends itself on several counts: 1) it allows for the preservation of the 3 beat meter; 2) it allows for the grammatical agreement of the 3.m.s. verb ירגזון with the masculine noun אהלים, rather than the feminine noun יריעות, as required by the MT’s accentuation; 3) it allows for אהל to be the A-constituent in the matched-pair אהל // יריעה, as is usual in biblical poetry (cf. Isa 54:2; Jer 4:20; 10:20; 49:20, etc.); 4) the use of ellipsis (in the third colon) as a poetic technique is already attested in Hab 3:2.

48 The usual plural form of the noun נהר, “river,” is the feminine נהרות (cf. Hab 3:9). The LXX and Barb. (ποταμοί), and Vulg. (*fluminibus*) evidently interpreted נהרות as the plural “rivers.” Tg. Jon., on the other hand, apparently read the singular נהר, but interpreted it as a metaphor for a multitude, אַלּוּלַי מְנַעֲרֵיָהּ מִשְׁרַעְיָהּ כִּנְסָאָי נַחֲרָה יִרְגָּזָן יִקְדֵּם יִוְי. “Behold, wrath from before YHWH was against kings and their retinues, which were as numerous as the waters of the river”; cf. Gordon and Cathcart, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, 158, n.37. However, the principle of *lectio difficilior potior* compels us to at least attempt to explain נהרות as it appears in Hab 3:8.

Accordingly, the final mem may be re-vocalised either as an enclitic, or else the dual suffix. As Heibert noted, the dual form is used at Ugarit to refer to the mythological sources of the deep (cf. CTA [= KTU] 4[51].4.21; 6.1.33; 49.1.5; Heibert, *God of My Victory*, 23, n.27). However, Tsumura has argued
that at Ugarit the dual form \( nhrm \) never occurs in the context of cosmogonic conflict (which seems to form the background of the imagery in the poem; cf. Cassuto, “Chapter iii of Habakkuk and the Ras Shamra Texts”, 3–15). Moreover, he has demonstrated that in Ugaritic the usual order of the word-pair is \( ym // nhr \) (including the single instance of a \( ym // nhrm \) word-pair), rather than \( nhr // ym \), as it appears in Hab 3:8; David T. Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 165–66; Tsumura, “Ugaritic Poetry and Habakkuk 3”, 29–30; cf. the equivalent Akkadian pair \( ti-a-a-ta \) “sea” // \( na-ra-am \) “river” in *Atra-Ḫasîs III IV*, lines 5–6; Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 166, n.9. Accordingly, Tsumura was inclined to understand “sea” and “river” as a “traditional” pair in ancient Semitic languages, and Habakkuk’s usage simply as a metaphorical, without any direct association with the *Chaokampf* motif (Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 166).

The dual form \( נַהֲרָיִם \) is also attested in BH; always in the form \( אֲרַם נַהֲרָיִם \), “Aram of the Two Rivers” (Gen 24:10; Deut 23:4 [Heb.5]; Judg 3:8; 1 Chr 19:6; Ps 60:2) as a designation of Mesopotamia. The LXX translates this GN with \( μεσοποτάμιος \) in Gen 24:10; Deut 23:5; 1 Chron 19:6). LXX Ps 60 has an abbreviated superscription, in which the toponym is omitted. The translation of Judg 3:8 is more varied: LXX\(^A\), \( χοισαρσαθωμ βασιλέως συρίας ποταμῶν, “Chusarsathom king of the rivers of Syria”; LXX\(^B\), \( χοισαρσαθαμ βασιλέως συρίας ποταμῶν, “Chusarsathaim king of the rivers of Syria”; while Josephus, *Ant.* 5.179–184, names: \( χοισαρσαθως τῶν ἀσσυρίων βασιλέως, “Chusarsathos, king of Assyria”). Each of these attestations of \( אֲרַם נַהֲרָיִם \) occurs in prose contexts, and it may be that \( נהרים \) in Hab 3:8 functions metonymically for \( אֲרַם נַהֲרָיִם \), and by extension the land of Mesopotamia. This possibility is strengthened by Judg 3:8 which refers to 
\( כוּשַׁן יַרְשָׁתִים מֵלֶך אֲרַם נַהֲרָיִם, “Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram-Naharaim”, who attacked Israel in
the days of the Judge Othniel. Significantly, this is the only place in which כושן (Hab 3:7) is paralleled. Consequently, it might be preferable to understand כושן in Hab 3:7 as a metonymic allusion to Cushman-Rishathaim. In which case, נהרים and ים, together should be understood as metonymically referring to Babylon. This possibility is supported by the paraphrase of Hab 3:7 in Tg. Jon.: “I gave them into the hand of Cushan the wicked” which echoes Judg 3:8, “and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim (lit. Cushan the twice-wicked).”

Perhaps a preferable option, however, is to view Hab 3:7–8 as a complex merismus, similar to those described above. In this case, נהרים may be associated with Mesopotamia north-east of Palestine; ים may be associated with the Mediterranean coast to the west; and ארץ מדרים may be associated with the traditional territories of Midian to the south-south-east. This suggests that כושן is to be identified with כוש to the south-west (cf. Gen 2:13; 10:6; Isa 11:11; 20:4–5; Jer 46:6–9, where the Euphrates and the Nile are counterpoised). Further support for this interpretation lies in the fact that the references proceed from the south (v.7), northward (v.8), following the march of the divine warrior in Hab 3:3–4.

Finally, it should be noted that J. J. M. Roberts has suggested that the imagery of Hab 3:8 is multivalent. In Roberts’ words, “The point of the question is not to suggest that God’s anger is really directed at Babylon, rather than the natural world. The point of the question is to identify Babylon with the primeval powers of chaos and thus to suggest that this new march of Yahweh is a fundamental reenactment (sic.) of Yahweh’s primeval victories from which there emerged an ordered world under God’s kingship”; J. J. M. Roberts Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 155; see also, Ferris J. Stephens, “The Babylonian Dragon Myth in Habakkuk 3” JBL 43 (1924): 290–293.
This verse is especially difficult; cf. Franz Delitzsch, Der Prophet Habakuk (Leipzig: K. Tauchnitz, 1843), 165; Andersen, Habakkuk, 320. The translation here follows that of Tsumura, who analysed the noun ערי as a *figura etymologica* (cf. GKC §117p); David T. Tsumura, “Niphal with an Internal Object in Hab 3, 9a,” JSS 31 (1986): 11–16.


The MT has the *piʿel* verb נְּהָּרוֹת֯תְּבַקַע־אָרֶץ, lit. “rivers you split the earth”; however, in its place the LXX has the passive, ποταμ ῥάγησεται γῆ, “the land of rivers will be torn asunder”. Accordingly, it might be preferable to emend the verse to read: תִבָּקַע֯אָרֶץ֯נְּהָּרוֹת.

Heibert draws attention to the parallel of ארץ in v. 9 and הרים in v.10; Heibert, God of My Victory, 28.

Treating the *hapax* רוֹם as a collective noun, “the heights”; Wearne, “Habakkuk 3:10–11: In Defence of a Masoretic Unit Division”, 515–18.

LXX has θάνατον, rather than מַכְשַׁת, suggesting מַתָּח. However, It has been observed that the colon is unusual insofar as it has four words, while the surrounding cola only have three, and this might support the deletion of מַכְשַׁת entirely; cf. Andersen, Habakkuk, 337. However, the noun רוֹם, “foundation”, in the following colon rather testifies the authenticity of רי ל. Consequently, “head of a wicked house” should be understood etymologically, with the common acceptation, “dynasty”.

Andersen understood this to be a reference to disembowelling; Andersen, Habakkuk, 337–38.

Another *hapax*. The translation “warrior” can be inferred from the context; cf. פְּרָּזוֹן, Judg 5:7; וֹפִרְּזוֹנ, Judg 5:11; Andersen, Habakkuk, 338. The object of the 3.m.s. pronominal suffix may be identified with the “head of a wicked house” (see above).
It is difficult to make sense of this verse, but the MT is supported by the LXX and Barb.; cf. Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 338.

In order to preserve the parallelism of the bicolon, the translation above follows Andersen in reading חמר as an infinitive absolute (cf. √חמר; Ps 46:3 [Heb. 4]; Lam 1:20; 2:11); Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 339.

Note, with Andersen, that the wāw-consecutive suggests that, at this point, the poet is recalling a past victory, not a future hope; Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 350.

The simile is paralleled in 2 Sam 22:34 and Ps 18:34.

The 1.c.s. pronominal suffix is unexpected, but its attestation in all three iterations of the formula (2 Sam 22:34 and Ps 18:34 and Hab 3:19) attests to its authenticity.

The 1.c.s. pronominal suffix is *prima facie* surprising. Tg. Jon., Vulg., and Mur 88 support the 1.c.s; however, LXX and Syr. have the less difficult 3.m.s.; see Roberts *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 148.
Appendix D

BALAAM, SON OF BEOR

Assuming Balaam, son of Beor, in Combination I can be identified with the biblical Balaam, son of Beor—which must be judged extremely likely—then there is some value in turning to biblical literature to consider how Balaam was perceived in history and tradition. Furthermore, given that the biblical accounts contain several references to Balaam’s homeland, the biblical allusions might yield helpful clues pertaining to the provenance of the DAPT.

D.1. BALAAM THE SEEER

In biblical tradition Balaam is best known for the episode in Numbers 22–24, which reports his summons by Balaq, the king of Moab, to pronounce imprecations against the Israelites during their sojourn in Transjordan. Allusions to this incident also occur in Deut 23:4b–5 (Heb. 5b–6); Nehemiah 13:2; Josh 24:9–10; Mic 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; and Jude 1:11.¹ In addition, Num 31:8, 16 (cf. Josh 13:22; Rev 2:14) identifies Balaam as an instigator in the Baal of Peor incident, despite the fact that he is not named in the corresponding narrative in Num 25:1–15.²

In the Numbers 22–24 pericope Balaam bears no prophetic or divinatory title (on the difficult noun וֹתְרָה, see below), but in Num 22:7 Balaq’s messengers carry with them פְּרָעָה (LXX μαντεία), lit. “divinations”. This

¹ Cf. 2 Pet 2:15.
term is usually translated “fees of divination” (cf. Vulg. *divinationis pretium*), but it may also refer to the tools used for divination (cf. Tg. *Ps.-J.*), "the sealed arrows of divination were in their hands”, which is doubtless influenced by Ezek 21:22 [Heb. 28], see below). In either case, the reference to קסמים implies that Balaam was considered a diviner. This inference is supported by Joshua 13:22 (based on Num 31:8), in which Balaam is named הַקוֹסֵם, “the diviner” (LXX τὸν μάντιν). This is the only place in the Hebrew Bible in which Balaam is unequivocally given a mantic title (see below). Additionally, in Num 24:1 Balaam is represented as actively seeking omens (נְחָשִים; LXX οἶωνός). It is clear from usage elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible that both קֶסֶם (and the related verb קָסַם) and נַחַש (and the related verb נָחַש) denote some sort of divinatory practice, but to what precisely do they refer?

The noun קסם occurs x11 in the Hebrew Bible and the verb קָסַם occurs x22. In the LXX קסם/קָסַם are regularly translated with the general terms μάντις/μαντεύομαι, “diviner/divine”. In most cases it is impossible to infer from the context the manner in which this sort of divination was conducted, but in 1 Sam 28:8 Saul asks the medium at Endor to קסמי־נא֯לי֯באוב, “divine for me by a spirit” (LXX μάντευσον), which might imply that קסם is specifically related to necromancy. However, in the archetypal list of

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5 Note that in 1 Sam 28:9 (cf. 1 Sam 28:3), mediums are referred to as ידועNike and אובות; cf. the pairing of אוב and ידוע in Lev19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chron 33:6; Isa 8:19; 19:3.
abhorrent mantic practitioners in Deut 18:10–11, קסם קוסמים (LXX μαντευόμενος μαντείαν), “the one who divines divinations”, is related to מנהש (LXX κληδονιζόμενος και οἰωνιζόμενος), “the fortune-teller and the diviner”, while שאול ואב ודרת ורשהアイדמית (LXX εγγαστρίμυθος και τερατοσκόπος ἑπερωτῶν τοὺς νεκρούς), “the enquirer of spirits, necromancer, and seeker of the dead” are named separately. Usage elsewhere suggests that קסם might be related to oneiromancy. In Mic 3:6 we read עליך לעלך מצוות ואשים,LXX μαντευόμενος μαντείαν, “therefore, it will be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination”, which has connotations of nocturnal revelation. This has a clear resonance with the prominence of nocturnal revelations in the Balaam tradition in both biblical and extra-biblical sources (cf. Num 22:8–13, 19–21; DAPT I.1; Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, 28:2; Tg. Ps.-J. Num 22:5; Num Rab. 20:7; Vulg. Num 22:5). This same pairing of קסם and חזה is also found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ezek 13:6, 7, 23; 21:29 [Heb. 21:34]; Mic 3:7). In this regard, it is particularly interesting to note Zech 10:2, in which the diviners (קוסמים) see (חזה) in parallelism with dreamers (חלמות): והקוסמים פה חזה והלמהות השוא והקוסמים פה חזה והלמהות השוא, “the diviners see falsehood and the dreamers vanity”. The other notable occurrence of קסם is in Ezek 21:21–23 [Heb. 21:27–28]: כי יצימיו מלך בכלי אלאמ אמור בראר שנות נורכין לקסם קיסם קוסם כל קלקל בחצים ואשים, “for the king of Babylon stands at the crossroads, at the parting of the ways, to divine a divination, shake the arrows, consult the teraphim, inspect the liver”. It has been suggested that the shaking of arrows, consultation of teraphim and hepatoscopy in this passage are subcategories of

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6 If so, the implication from Num 22:7 and Ezek 21:22 [Heb. 22:28] that קסם קוסמים relates to an object must be explained. Perhaps these were objects used for inducing a vision? This might be consistent with Num 22:7, but Ezek 21:22 [Heb. 22:28] seems to imply that the קסם was itself used as a determination between two alternatives. It should also be noted that in this verse קסם apparently stands pars pro toto for the list of divinations in the preceding verse. As such, Ezek 21:22 [Heb. 22:28] should be noted as a caveat, but its significance is unclear.
In which case, קֶסֶם/קָסַם could be interpreted broadly as referring either to a class of divinatory practices, or as a general term for any sort of divination. However, it is equally possible that קֶסֶם was itself intended as a technical term, equivalent to the other three. Consequently, it seems that קָסַם/קֶסֶם have a comparatively broad semantic range, but in a number of instances some form of visionary revelation seems to be intended, especially when paired with הָזָה.

כי/כן and נַחַש/נָּחַש present an even more complicated picture. The noun נַחַש occurs x2 in the Hebrew Bible, while the verb נָּחַש occurs x11. In the LXX נַחַש/נָּחַש is regularly translated by οἰωνός/οἰωνίζομαι, “augury”, which is derived from οἰωνός, “bird of prey” (cf. LSJ, II–III, I, respectively). In the majority of cases the translation augury is broadly compatible. However, Gen 44:5, refers to the silver cup (cf. Gen 44:2), in which Joseph practiced divination: הָלֹא הָזָה אֲשֶר יִשָּה אֵד וַאֲשֶר יִנְחֵשׁ בו (notwithstanding LXX, οἰωνίζεται). But, in Num 24:1 it is implied that Balaam’s modus operandi was to “go out” to seek an omen: וַלֵא–הָלֹכָה כָּכָה כָּלֵעַרנָּה, “and he did not go, as before, to seek an omen,” which, on the face of it, does not seem to imply cyathomancy. Finally, in light of the resemblance between נַחַש/נָּחַש and נָּחָּש “snake,” it has been suggested that the term might refer to ophidiomancy, or, more speculatively, to a hissing or whispering sound produced by these diviners, but this goes beyond the available evidence. Consequently, as with קֶסֶם/קָסַם, it is impossible to precisely identify נַחַש/נָּחַש with a single divinatory technique, and, once again, it may be that the term covers a range of mantic practices.

9 In this connection it is interesting to note Balaq’s patronymic, בֵּן צַפֹּר, lit. “son of a bird,” which may involve a subtle word play on Balaam’s activities as an augur.
Notwithstanding the difficulty involved with defining these terms, it should be noted that in several instances כָּסֶם and נָשֶׁ֣ הוא are found together as a parallel pair (e.g. Num 23:23; Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 17:17; cf. Num 22:7, 24:1), and their inclusion in lists of illicit divinatory and magical practices suggests that both terms had a technical meaning.

Beyond these technical terms, the Num 22–24 pericope contains a number of additional clues as to Balaam’s modus operandi. In Num 22:8–12 and 22:19–20 Balaam is described as receiving nocturnal revelations reminiscent of the nocturnal theophany in the DAPT I.1–3 (cf. וַיָּבוּאְהֵלֶ֑ם אלֶֽהָ֑ם בלֶֽאֶ֑ם לָ֑ילה, “and God came to Balaam at night” Num 22:20; וַיֹּֽקָם בלֶֽאֶ֑ם בֶּבָֽקָר, “and Balaam arose in the morning”, Num 22:13, 21). It seems probable that this is to be identified as (or related to) the כָּסֶם, since in Num 22:8 it follows directly from the messengers bearing the כָּסֶם וָּהָנָשֶׁ֣ הוא. 11 It is not specified in the text whether these revelations were initiated by God, or whether Balaam performed some ritual act to induce the theophany, but it should be noted that

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11 If Num 22:8, 19 are understood to imply that Balaam actively sought divine instruction, this may explain God’s otherwise perplexing change of heart in Num 22:22. The jarring juxtaposition of Num 22:22a, וַיִּרָֽאֶֽהוּ אָלֶֽהָ֑ם כָּסֶם וָּהָנָשֶׁ֣ הוא, “and God’s anger burned because of his going,” with Num 22:22b, וַיִּשָּׁ֣בֵר בִּלְבָּ֑ל אֶֽהָ֑מוֹן, “if these men have come to summon you, arise, go with them,” has often been interpreted as evidence for multiple sources (cf. Hackett, “Balaam”, ABD: 569–70). However, if the implication of Num 22:19 is that Balaq and Balaam obstinately sought to change God’s original determination, then the divine anger might be directed at Balaam for his wilful stubbornness in going despite God’s earlier instruction. The irony in this narrative is, therefore, two-fold, not only is the “seer” blind to the presence of the angel blocking his way, which is painfully obvious to his donkey, but Balaam is also characterised as stubbornly and repeatedly trying to drive the ass onward. Both of these failings play on stereotypical entailments of the Donkey’s perceived stupidity and stubbornness; Kenneth C. Way, Donkeys in the Biblical World (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 98, 199. This interpretation of Balaam’s wilfulness in Num 22:22–35 seems to be supported by later Jewish commentators, and may have been the source of the later biblical and extra-biblical references to Balaam, which portray him as stubborn in his determination to curse the Israelites; cf. Vermès, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism, 134).
Balaam’s instructions to the messengers (Num 22:8, 19) imply that he believed a divine visitation was assured (cf. Josephus, A. J., 4.105: ἀνέκρινε τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διάνοιαν “he inquired the will of God”; cf. Num 23:3: ἠλιπόλες ἰδρὰς, “perhaps יְהוָה will come to meet me”).

In addition to the omens and nocturnal revelations it is also important to consider the significance of the sacrifices offered by Balaam before the pronouncement of each of his oracles (Num 23:1–5, 14–17, 29–30). It has been suggested that these sacrifices might imply that he engaged in extispicy; however, the text plainly states that in each instance Balaam left Balaq standing beside the sacrifices while he went off to look for an omen; e.g. התיצב על־עלתך ואלכה, “stand by your offering and I will go, perhaps יְהוָה will come to meet me” (Num 23:3; cf. 23:15, 17; 24:1). Consequently, while the sacrifices were evidently essential to Balaam’s preparation (cf. Num 23:4), it was apparently not from the sacrifices that the omens were gleaned.

12 In fact, it may be possible to detect a subtle tension later in the narrative with regard to the manner in which Balaam’s mantic abilities are represented, and this might shed light on the vague description of the nocturnal revelation. Several times Balaam separates himself to seek divine instruction (Num 22:8, 19; 23:3, 15), and each time it is specified that it is God who met with him (Num 22:4, 20; 23:4, 16); as such, the narrative has a subtle polemic undertone, in which the divinatory agency is entirely removed from the diviner and ascribed to God. As a consequence of this, the methods used to achieve revelation are backgrounded and the divine action is foregrounded, meaning that, from a didactic point of view, the text serves to establish the limitations of the divinatory arts.

13 In particular comparisons have been drawn between Balaam and the Mesopotamian bārū; cf. Christopher Wright Mitchel, The Meaning of BRK “To Bless” in the Old Testament (SBL Dissertation Series 95; Atlanta Ga.: Scholars, 1987), 91; Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel, 150, with additional references; Benjamin Uffenheimer, Early Prophecy in Israel (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 79–80.

14 Note esp. Num 23:29–24:1, in which Balaam offers sacrifices but does not seek an omen. Admittedly, it is possible to interpret these verses as saying that Balaam left Balaq beside the altars while he went to examine the entrails, but this is not the plain reading of the text; e.g.
No less ambiguous is Balaam’s self-description in Num 24:4, 16. These verses contain the most elaborate descriptions of Balaam as a mantic specialist. In these verses the interdiegetic narrator Balaam describes himself as one who, שמע אם־אמר־אלא אשמ ממהות שיר יהוה נפל עיניו, “hears the words of El, who sees visions of Shadday; falling, but with eyes uncovered”. In Num 24:16 it is added that he ידע דעת עליון, “knows knowledge of the Most High”. This description has a clear resonance with the depiction of Balaam in the DAPT I.1 as one who was a חזה אלנים, “seer of the gods” (cf. שד and שד in I.5, I.6). Moreover, as has often been noted, the expression נפל עיניו, “falling, but with eyes uncovered” in Num 24:4, 16, suggests the behaviour of an ecstatic visionary; cf. 1 Sam 19:23–24, in which Saul, overcome by the spirit of God and prophesying (יתנבא), is said to fall down naked (ויפלע,function of God and prophesying (יתנבא), is said to fall down naked (ויפלע).16

Later Jewish sources evince a similar range of descriptors. In A.J. 4.104, Josephus describes Balaam as μάντις ἄριστος τῶν τότε, “the best diviner of that time”; Philo, in On the Life of Moses 1.264, refers to him as μαντεία

Num 23:3, 15, 17 where it is specified that Balaq stood beside the burnt offerings (עולה), while Balaam went aside. Note the similarity of these sacrifices to the sacrifices for the sanctification of Aaron before approaching God on the day of atonement, as described in Lev 16:1–19 (Lev 16:3: פר בקר לחטאת ואיל עלוה, “a bull, the young of an ox, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering”; cf. Deut 23:1: שבעה פרים ושבעה אילים, “seven bulls and seven rams”).

15 On the possibility that these verses might be an interpolation; cf. Hackett, “Balaam”, ABD: 570–71.

16 Cf. S. Herbert Bess, “The Office of the Prophet in Old Testament Times,” Grace Journal 1 (1960): 8–9, who argues, theologically, that the suspension of Balaam’s personality manifest in ecstatic behaviour was a consequence of his being out of harmony with the divine message (by inference the same would apply to Saul in 1 Sam 19:23–24). According to Bess, such unusual “ecstatic” behaviour was not the norm for biblical prophets. However, the question of ecstasy prophecy in Israel and the ancient Near East continues to be debated. For a recent discussion with references, cf. de Jong, Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets, 287–89, 297, 340.
περιβόητος...δ' ἀπαντα μὲν ἐμεμύητο τὰ μαντικῆς εἰδῆ, οἰωνοσκοπίαν δ' ἐν
tοῖς μάλιστα συγκεκροτηκώς ἐθαυμάζετο, “a famous diviner...who had been
initiated into every form of the divination of signs, but was admired above all
for his proficiency in augury”; while in On the Confusion of Tongues, 159, he
is οἰωνόμαντιν καὶ τερατοσκόπον, “an augur and interpreter of signs,” and in
On the Change of Names, 202, he is τὸν οἰωνοσκόπον, “the augur.” In Liber
Antiquitatum Biblicarum, 28:2, Pseudo-Philo identifies Balaam as interpretam
somniorum, “interpreter of dreams.” While this latter designation may simply
be an interpretation based on the nocturnal revelations of Num 22:8–12, 19–
20, it may also be derived from the noun ἰογια in Num 22:5 (see below). Last
of all, in B. Bat. 15b:2, Balaam is given the title ἱβρ, “prophet”, as one of
seven prophets (בָּנָיִים היבר) who prophesied to the gentiles. This is the only
time the title ἱβρ is applied to him. Each of these titles (especially those
related to μάντις/μαντεύωμαι and οἰωνός/οἰωνίζομαι, see below) can be
plausibly explained as interpretations dependent on the biblical narratives
about Balaam, but the possibility that they might reflect extra-biblical
traditions cannot be dismissed.

In light of this possibility, one other late description of Balaam is worthy
of note. In his introduction of Balaam in On the Life of Moses, 1.265, Philo
says:

προείπε γὰρ τοῖς μὲν ἐπομβρίας θέρους ἀκμάζοντος, τοῖς δ' αὐχμὸν τε
καὶ φλογμὸν ἐν μέξῳ χειμῶνι, τοῖς δ' ἐξ εὐετηρίας ἄφορίαν καὶ ἐμπαλιν
ἐκ λιμῶδι φοράν, ἐνίος δὲ πλημμύρας ποταμῶν καὶ κενώσεως καὶ
θεραπείας λοιμικῶν νοσημάτων καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων

For to some he had accurately foretold an abundance of rain in the prime of
summer, and to others drought and extreme heat in the middle of winter, to
others barrenness following a good season and, contrariwise, a plentiful crop
following famine, to some rivers in flood or empty, treatments for pestilences,
and countless other things.
While this description may be nothing more than a paradigmatic list invented by Philo to convey the impression of an exceptionally gifted diviner, the nature of these prophecies resonates remarkably with the drought which is apparently prophesied in the DAPT (I.6–7, cf. I.14). Could it be, then, that Philo’s description reflects a body of folk traditions that was still transmitted in the first century C.E., but which can be traced as far back as the Iron Age?

Finally, in Num 22:6 Balaam is famed for his efficacy as one who can pronounce blessings and curses: “for I know that whatever you bless is blessed, and whatever you curse will be cursed”. Though, as Cristopher Mitchell has argued, this remark should not be interpreted to mean that Balaam had autonomous imprecatory power, since the biblical narratives make it abundantly clear that he was incapable of acting independently of the divine will (cf. Num 22:8, 18, 35, 38; 23:3–5, 8, 12, 16, 20, 26; 24:14; Josh 24:9–10; Deut 23:4b–5 [Heb. 5b–6]; Neh 13:2). Rather, this comment should be understood in terms of Balaam’s skill and accuracy as a diviner (cf. Num 23:1–5, 14–17, 29–30, esp. 24:1). This is congruent with Balaam’s characterisation in the DAPT—especially with regard to Balaam’s weeping. As such, notwithstanding the superscription of the DAPT, Balaam is not so much the protagonist of the story, as simply a medium through whom the divine message is communicated.

To summarise, biblical tradition primarily characterises Balaam as an interpreter of dreams, a seeker of omens, and communicator of the divine will. Each of these actions finds points of contact in the DAPT.

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17 Thus, when the narrative layers are stripped away, Balaam’s deeds are seen to be essentially comparable to the prophetic(divinatory) activities reflected in the Mari letters; cf. Martti Nissinen, “Mari Letters”, in Prophets and prophecy in the ancient Near East (ed. Martti Nissinen; SBLWAW 12; Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2003), 209 13–14.
D.2. Evidence Regarding Balaam’s Homeland

As for Balaam’s homeland, in Num 22:5 we read: “וַיֵּלֶשֶׁת מַלְאָכֵי אֲלֵי בּוֹלֵעַ מֶלֶךְ בָּאָרְכָּו, וַיֶּלֶשֶׁת אֶשֶּׁר לְעֵדְנוֹ הָאָרֶץ בְּרָאָשָׁי” (and he (Balaq) sent messengers to Balaam, son of Beor, at Pethor, which is on the river, in the land of the sons of his people”). In the MT the difficult noun פְּתוֹרָה is apparently rendered as a GN, פֶּטָרָה, with locative הֵלֶשֶׁת (cf. LXX Φαθουρά; Tg. Onq. פתרה; Sam. Pent. פתרה). However, in the Vulg. (ariolum), Syr. (?('מורה תלמיות), Tg. Neof. (ווחר חלמיות), פֶּטָרָה is interpreted as a nomen agentis meaning “interpreter (of dreams)” (cf. פתר in the stories about Joseph in Gen 40:8, 16, 22; 41:8, 12, 13, 15).18 Furthermore, as Scott Layton has remarked, the pattern PN + patronym + nomen agentis, is precisely paralleled in Josh 13:22: בָּאָרְכָּו בָּנָן הָוָסְם, “Balaam, son of Beor, the diviner”.19 In addition, Deut 23:4 (Heb.5) has: מַפְתָּר אִרֵם הַנְּהָרִים, “from Pithom (in) Aram of the two Rivers”;20 however, this has plausibly been explained as a case of inner-biblical exegesis.21

Be that as it may, one long-standing view identifies פֶּטָרָה with פִּיטְרוּ near Carchemish in northern Syria, known from the annals of Shalmaneser III.22 But this identification has been challenged on morphological grounds.

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(i.e. *qatīl versus *qitl base), and on the grounds that the distance Balaam would then have had to travel to reach Balaq is such that he would have been unlikely to undertake the journey on only a donkey with two servants on foot (Num 22:22). However, it should be noted that this was not incredible to the writer of Deut 23:4.

It is clear that the crux interpretum אָרֶץ בֵּנֵי עָם lies at the heart of this difficulty. In the MT שָׁם is vocalised 'ammô, “his people”; however, the expression “the land of the sons of his people” is unparalleled in BH as a geographic designation, and this has encouraged commentators to seek alternative explanations. In 1945 A. S. Yahuda proposed that שָׁם should be identified with the land of ’Amau (‘ȝmũw), known from Egyptian sources as a general designation for Asiatics. However, as Donald Redford observed, this fails to account for the ’ālep /ȝ/, which in Egyptian would have been realised as a liquid /l/ or /r/. It is true that in Late Egyptian liquid /ȝ/ might be lost,

23 Cf. Layton, “Whence Comes Balaam?”, 35–36. Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 326, calculated that the distance from Pitru to Moab would have been something like 400 miles, a journey of more than 20 days, and that the time taken for the four journeys of Numbers 22 would have required about 3 months. That Balaam’s reputation would have been known such a long way away, and that Balaq would have undertaken to summon him, is certainly remarkable, but it is not inconceivable.

24 As Layton observed, other instances of the expression שָׁם בֵּנֵי עָם followed by pronominal suffix are not a precise parallel, as these are never used in the context of a geographical designation. Layton, “Whence Comes Balaam?”, 46.


26 Cf. Donald B. Redford, “Egypt and Western Asia in the Old Kingdom” JARCE 23 (1986): 127, n.18. I owe this reference to Julian Cooper, who includes a valuable discussion of Egyptian ’ȝmũw in his forthcoming Macquarie University doctoral dissertation: “Toponymy on
but we would then need to assume that a parallel development is reflected in the pronunciation of both languages (*ʿa(l)r*mau > *ʿamau*), or that Hebrew borrowed a Semitic loanword back from Egyptian. Neither scenario is impossible, but nor are they particularly likely.\(^\text{27}\)

An alternative solution is to follow, SP, Syr., and Vulg. and restore the variant אַרְצוֹ בְּנֵי עָמוֹ. “the land of the sons of Ammon”. The emendation has been defended on the grounds that it conforms to other geographical indications in the text: the river can readily be identified as the Jabbok, near Tell Deir ‘Alla (cf. §7.1), which formed the historical border of Ammonite territory (cf. Deut 2:37; 3:16; Josh 12:2; Num 21:24; Judg 11:13, 22), and the escarpment on the eastern edge of the Jordan Valley could be identified—by people living west of the Jordan—as הררי קדם, “the mountains of the east” (Num 23:7).\(^\text{28}\) Moreover, the appellation “Sons of Ammon” is well attested in the Hebrew Bible, and is even attested as a self-designation of the Ammonites in the Tell Siran Bottle and Amman Theatre inscription.\(^\text{29}\)

Be that as it may, the authenticity of the MT’s reading is supported by LXX (λαοὖ αὐτοῦ) and Tgs. Neof. Onq. and Ps.-J. (עמה). In light of this textual witness, and due to the fact that the shorter עמי is the more difficult reading, Scott Layton attempted to defend the phonological basis of עמי as a parallel designation of the GN Ammon. To support his argument, Layton cited

the Periphery: Placenames of the Eastern Desert, South Sinai and Red Sea in Hieroglyphic Documents”.

\(^{27}\) On the phonological realisation of Egyptian \(/\j\)/ see Carsten Peust, Egyptian Phonology: An Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language (Monographien zur ägyptischen Sprache, 2; Göttingen: Peust & Gutschmidt, 1999), 142.


\(^{29}\) Layton has observed that the name Ammon occurs x106 in the Hebrew Bible, x104 in the expression “Sons of Ammon”; see Layton, “Whence Comes Balaam?”, 49. Cf. the lone Neo-Assyrian reference to Ammon as ba-an Am-ma-na (and the more common: Am-ma-na, and bīt Am-ma-na); Daniel I. Block, “Bny ’mwn: The Sons of Ammon”, AUSS 22 (1984): 207–08.
comparable examples of PNN and GNN in which the termination -on is reduced to -o. However, he neglected to explain why the variant 'ammō would be preserved in this instance alone; after all, as Layton himself observed, “the fact remains that the name 'ammôn occurs 106 times in the MT … and it is never misspelled”.31

But there is yet another possibility that, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet been considered. The designation בני-עמי is almost exactly paralleled in the Qatabanian appellation bnw 'm “the sons of 'Amm”, where 'Amm is the name of the Qatabanian national god.32 It remains an open question whether 'Amm was venerated throughout the Levant (cf. the Ammonite PN, אלהים, “'Amm is my god”), but the similarity between the appellations בני-עמי and bnw 'm is too close to be ignored. It is, therefore, interesting to note Lipinski’s suggestion that there may be an Arabic substratum within the dialect of the DAPT (cf. §6.4).33 Could it be that Numbers 22:5 preserves a vestige of the designation “the sons of 'Amm”, which was subsequently misunderstood and reanalysed as the tautologous common noun in the Hebrew tradition? If so, then the reliability of the entire biblical tradition regarding Balaam’s origins is thrown into question.34

31 Ibid, 49.
34 This begs the question whether the designation “the sons of 'Amm” might be related to the PN בני-עמי (Gen 19:38). In the aetiological tale about the incestuous origins of Moab and Ammon in Genesis 19:30–38 we read: והצעירה גם היה ילדה בן אביו בני עומר היא אמא בני-עמי; “the younger also bore a son, and she named him ben-ʿămmî; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day” (Gen 19:38). As Fritz Hommel argued, the name ben-ʿămmî might indicate that the Ammonites also venerated 'Amm; Fritz Hommel, Aufsätze und Abhandlungen arabisch-semitologischen Inhalts, 2 (München: G. Franz, 1900) 155; cf. Seow, “AM עם”, DDD: 25. However, this is the only time the name ben-ʿămmî is applied to the Ammonites, and in light of the context it is likely that the meaning was intentionally droll,
This does not necessarily mean that the provenance of the DAPT should be sought in Arabia; indeed, both biblical tradition and the physical location of the DAPT associate Balaam with Transjordan. In general terms, there is evidence for contact with north-Arabian traders in Transjordan by the 8th century B.C.E., and it might be that the Balaamite traditions should be identified with these groups. In other words, it is not implausible that the reputation of a famed seer (and perhaps Balaam himself) would have passed along the trade routes, and were reappropriated and localised in the vicinity of Deir ʿAlla. In that case, the variant ʿammon which is attested in some textual witnesses might inadvertently point in the right direction. In any case, it must be stressed that, as with so much pertaining to the interpretation of the DAPT, there can be no certainty in this matter.

In sum, the ambiguity means the biblical tradition is inadequate to situate Balaam geographically, and so is ultimately of little or no use for determining the provenance of the DAPT.

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i.e. “son of my kin” (cf. the apparent pun on ʿəb, father in Moab, Gen 19:37). This is clearly how the verse was understood by the LXX with its explanatory pluses in Gen 19:37–38. As such, the etymology of Ammon must remain an open question, and the eponymous ancestor ben-ʿəmmî cannot be used to situate the ben-ʿəmmō in the territory of Ammon.


36 After all, the possibility of Balaam (and Balaamite traditions) travelling to Moab from North-Arabia is no more outrageous than the possibility of his travelling from northern Syria.
Appendix E

**SPEECH MOVEMENTS IN THE DAPT COMBINATION I**

As discussed in Chapter 5, the identity of the speaker is an important clue for the interpretation of I.7ff. The table below is intended to visually represent the speech movements of Combination I in order to further clarify the arguments developed in 5.1.1. In what follows, words written in **bold type** are those spoken by the gods; words in *italics* are words spoken by Balaam. Rather than arranging the text according to the line divisions of the plaster inscription (as in Chapter 5), the text is presented according to the modern conventions for Hebrew poetry, with parallel cola indented. This arrangement is intended to highlight the literary quality of the DAPT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[…] of [Balaam, son of Beor], a man who is/was a seer of the gods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The gods came to him at night [and] revealed (lit. uncovered) to him, according to the pronouncement of El. [And] they said to [Balaam], son of Beor, <em>Thus will (El) do according to the bird omen(?)</em>. Each will see that which you have heard*.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And Balaam arose before morning, […] right hand […], and he could not eat, and he wept bitterly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And his people went up to him, and they said to Balaam, son of Beor, “Do you fast? Do you weep?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| And he said to them,  
*“Sit down! I will reveal to you what the šaddayīn have done(?).  
Now, come! See the deeds of the gods!  
The gods gathered;  
And the šaddayīn took their place in the council,*  

*And they said to Š[…].  
‘Sew shut the heavens with your cloud!  
Let there be darkness and not brightness,* |
Gloom and not heat (?),
In order that you might induce terror and much darkness,
But do not be angry forever!’

For the oriole (?) has reproached the Griffon Vulture (?) and the clutch of the Egyptian Vulture (?);
The ostrich had compassion on the young of the hawk (?), but harmed the chicks of the heron (?);
The swallow tore at the dove and the sparrow (?) with its beak.
[...] and [...] the staff;
   When ewes lead, it is the rod that is led.
Hares ate [...].
Flitter-mice were filled [with bee]r;
   [Bat]'s got drunk [with) wine (?).
Hyenas heeded instruction;
   The cubs of the f[ox...].
Multitudes walked [...];
[...] laughed at the wise.
The poor woman (?) mixed myrrh,
   And the priestess [...].
[...] to the one who wears a girdle of threads (?).
The esteemed esteems, and the esteemer is esteemed.
The deaf hear from afar [...];
And all (fore)see (?) the restriction of procreation and fertility.
[...] to the leopard;
The piglet chased the young [of...]”
Appendix F

THE BIRDS OF THE DAPT

Pl.1—87: Black Kite; *Milvus migrans*.
Pl. 2—חצץ זהב: Golden Oriole; *Oriolus galbula.*
Pl.3—נשר: Griffon Vulture; *Vulture fuliris*.
Pl. 4—רָחֵם: Egyptian Vulture; *Neophron percnopterus* (adult in front, Juvenile behind).
Pl. 5.a—Nest of the Common Ostrich; *Struthio camelus*.

Pl. 5.b—Heron’s nest.
Pl.6—גֶּנץ: Levant Sparrowhawk; *Accipiter brevipes*.
Pl. 7—אנפה: Purple Heron; *Ardea purpurea*.
Appendix F: The Birds of Deir ‘Alla

Pl. 8 — בְּדִיר: Barn Swallow; *Hirundo rustica.*
Pl. 9—םי: Turtle Dove; *Columba turtur*. 
Pl.10—צפר: Dead Sea Sparrow; Passer moabiticus.
References:


Pl.10—Joseph Wolf, *The Ibis* (1867), pl.7 (Source: http://www.archive.org/).

* In light of the variety of bird species common to Jordan, and the near impossibility of taxonomic identification of the species in the DAPT, images are intended to be representative only. All images are sourced from works in the public domain.