9. «Down the River…»: A Shrine Model from Tel Kinrot in its Context

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ABSTRACT

The article gives an update on the recent results of the archaeological fieldwork of Kinneret Regional Project on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It furthermore discusses the original function of a pillared courtyard-building unearthed in «Field I» at Tel Kinrot and especially focuses on a fenestrated vessel, apparently typical of the Jordan Rift Valley and interpreted as a shrine model.

1. INTRODUCTION³

Tel Kinrot (Tell el-‘Orēme) is located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, c. 11 km north of modern Tiberias. The site, approximately 10 ha in size, is situated in a commanding position on a small pass along the via maris, the main trade route that connected Egypt with Greater Syria in antiquity. Its identification with the town of Kinneret, mentioned in Egyptian sources dating to the New Kingdom and in the Hebrew Bible, is commonly accepted.

The mound was settled from the Chalcolithic through the Iron Age IIB periods with a significant gap from the Early Bronze Age III to Middle Bronze Age IIA. It also remained uninhabited during the Late Bronze Age II and Iron Age IIA periods. Terraces, dwelling caves and isolated farmsteads attest the predominately agricultural use of the site until the Ottoman period after the Assyrian conquest at the close of the 8th century BC (Fritz 1978; 1990; 1993; 1999; 2008; Winn and Yakar 1984; Fritz and Vieweger 1996; Fritz and Münger 2002).

In 2003 the ‘Kinneret Regional Project’ was initiated as a follow-up to previous archaeological explorations directed by Volkmar Fritz (then German Protestant Institute of Archaeology, Jerusalem) at Tel Kinrot. During the 2003-2005 and 2007-2008 field seasons, field activities concentrated mainly on the Iron Age IB remains on the southwestern slope.⁴

Most of the attention, however, focused on a large excavation field close to the lakeshore. It incorporates several excavation areas that grew together over time (areas J, N, R, S and U; totaling c. 1200 m²) and is now dubbed «Field I» of the renewed excavations (Fig. 1). Work was mainly limited to the removal of balks and backfilling of old soundings. This allowed a large and continuous horizontal exposure of the main phase of the

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³ The authors wish to extend their greetings to Dr. Gerrit van der Kooij from Leiden University with this article that deals (also) with pottery vessels that materially link the two sites of Tell Deir ‘Allā and Tel Kinrot.

⁴ Starting in 2007 the ‘Kinneret Regional Project’ expanded its activities beyond the limits of Tel Kinrot with the establishment of a new sub-project headed by the Faculty of Religious Studies of Leiden University (‘Leiden University Project on Rural Eastern Galilee’). In its first phase, the project focuses on the small rural site of Horvat Kur, which dates to Hellenistic through Byzantine periods. Preparatory work for planned excavations consisted of a contact survey in 2007 and - after magnetometric and geoelectric explorations in early 2008 in collaboration with the University of Bern - a survey of Horvat Kur and its environs, as well as first soundings on the Khirbet were initiated in summer 2008 under the direction of Jürgen Zangenberg in collaboration with Mark van der Enden and Lucas Peti.

⁵ Only one area inaugurated by the ‘Kinneret Regional Project’ targeting Iron Age I remains is situated outside the confines of «Field I»: area W. This is a northwestern extension to a large excavation field already opened in the 1990s by Volkmar Fritz («Field II», combining areas K, M and W). The findings in area W confirmed that in this part of the city the building ground on the slope was leveled by means of massive terracing operations. Additionally, an elaborate drainage system was laid into the streets and alleys. All this is yet another indication for a centralized town planning during the Iron Age I.
Iron Age IB settlement (Pakkala et al. 2004; 2006; 2008; Münger et al. 2006; 2009; Münger 2008).

In contrast to many other Early Iron Age towns and villages in the Southern Levant, ancient Kinneret was at that time fortified by a broad defensive wall. This wall is partly a reuse of the Late Bronze Age I fortifications, but was also in parts built anew during the Iron Age IB (for a similar situation at Tel Hadar - just opposite the lake - see Kochavi 1998, 470-71 and Kochavi and Yadin 2008, 1756-57; cf. also Dietrich and Münger 2001, 49 with note 22).

The astonishingly well-preserved architecture unearthed in «Field I» shows that the city was well planned from the outset. A fairly broad street climbing uphill in a south-north direction intersects this area. Another street branches off west dividing this part of the excavation field into a northern and southern sector. Most impressive is a trapezoidal building complex east of the street (areas J, R and S; Fig. 2). Its western longitudinal wall was built in one construction phase over a distance of more than 30 meters. Its sub-units follow the incline and are thus terraced or built into the ground. Several mudbrick and stone installations point to diversified work processes.

This part of «Field I» also shed conclusive light on the reason for the end of this settlement phase. Tilted or distorted walls with, in some cases cracked boulders and skewed or overthrown mudbrick architecture clearly indicate that this settlement phase fell victim to a massive earthquake. As a secondary effect, parts of the dwellings went up in flames. Several chalices found intact above the ruins may indicate mourning rituals after...

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6 Note that in one of the rooms a burial of a 20-30 year-old woman in flexed position and a c. 4 year-old child was found while examining floor make-ups. Though sub-floor burials occurred during the Late Bronze Age (Gonen 1992), they are an unknown phenomenon in the material culture of the Iron Age I making this find exceptional.
the site’s devastation.

In the upper sector west of the street, a building consisting of two small rooms and a large courtyard was unearthed. This building was almost devoid of finds except for a few cultic vessels found in one of the rooms and two circular pits filled with bones dug into the courtyard. These finds may point to ritual activities in this place (see below). In contrast, the sector to its south yielded evidence for small-scale industries within the city as for example manifested by an olive press made of basalt (area U) or shallow, plastered basins of yet unknown purpose (area R). As in most other areas the architecture went through several building stages resulting in a sort of ‘spiral stratigraphy’ (Münger 2005, 88; Münger et al. 2009).

The primarily ‘Canaanite’ find assemblage of the Early Iron Age horizon at Tel Kinrot is especially rich and well-preserved. It nevertheless witnesses intense trade contacts with Egypt, Philistia, Phoenicia and Northern Syria (cf. e.g. Pakkala et al. 2004, 20-22 and Fig. 11; Münger in press with notes 73 and 76). The ceramic material of the last stage of the main phase closely parallels contemporary strata like Tel Hadar IV, Tel Dan IVB, Megiddo VIA or Yoqneam XVII and securely anchors its destruction to the terminal phase of the Iron Age IB (Fritz and Münger 2002, 16-18 with Figs 7-9; Münger 2005; Pakkala et al. 2006, Figs 5-25). This is confirmed by glyptic evidence dating to the mid 10th century BC (Münger 2007, 93-95 with Fig. 8). A few loci from test-trenches and some stray finds, however, indicate that the Iron Age city was founded at an earlier stage of the Iron Age I. Moreover, some features of the material culture suggest that at least a part of the local population might have been of a Northern (Syrian) origin (Münger in press).

Fig. 2. The Early Iron Age building complex in Field I (photograph courtesy of SkyView Ltd.)

7 According to the archaeological evidence, the chalices, which occasionally had traces of soot, can neither belong to a younger phase nor have been fallen from the rooftops, as the collapsing walls would have buried them (for chalices found in second storey pottery assemblages, cf. e.g. Herr 2006, Figs 14,17-19, 17,2; for Southern Levantine chalices in general cf. now Grutz 2007). For ‘termination rituals’ of domestic structures, cf. the short overview in Zuckerman 2007, 7-9.
2. **The Pillared Courtyard-Building and the Vessels Found in Room 3578**

As mentioned above, a large, oblong building, that was completely unearthed during the 2007 season, was found at the crossing of two streets in «Field I» (Fig. 3). It measures 11.80x5.95 meters. Adjacent to the intersection is a large courtyard (Locus 3507) that covers an area of slightly more than 29 m². Contrary to most comparable buildings, the courtyard is divided along its radial axis by a row of five pillars (Locus 3925). Its eastern side was thus possibly roofed, while the western part of the courtyard was an open-air space. Two occupational levels for the courtyard could be detected, and the same is true for one of the two rooms that extend to its western side (Loci 3538 and 3578). The courtyard building is neighbored to its north by a partly paved open area with a taboun and a small podium. To its west, an array of further rooms is climbing uphill.

As to the function of the courtyard, the lack of utilitarian objects or any other sign of domestic activities indicates that it is not a household courtyard. It should be noted, however, that two pits filled with bones of small livestock were detected.

Equally, the adjacent rooms show no traces of domestic use either. Nothing at all remains to suggest the function of the courtyard, for instance, as a market place or as a stable. The complete lack of evidence of any domestic or commercial use, as well as the prestigious position of the courtyard in the corner of two streets, rather suggests that it served as a small public space used for gatherings.

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8 This is, *e.g.*, completely different to the floor plans of the Early Iron Age architecture in the hill country (see Zwingenberg 2001, Fig. 44). However, a similar room partition is found in a building at contemporary Stratum 9a at Tell Keisan, «Chantier B», Loci 501-503 (Briend 1980, Figs 51-52) within the Phoenician realm.

9 An entrance to courtyard 3507 from the streets bordering its southern and eastern side must have existed, although it has not been identified with certainty, whereas an entrance from the courtyard to the somewhat higher lying room 3578 has been found.

10 The latter is replacing two earlier rooms Loci 3593 and 3594 that were originally subdivided by a poorly built partition wall.

11 Similar installations are normally found inside houses (*cf. e.g.* Herzog 1997, Fig. 5.4 among many others), attached to outer walls of buildings, they are, *e.g.*, found in Early Iron Age layers at Tell Beit Mirsim, Stratum B, Section SE (Albright 1943, pl. 2) or Khirbet Raddana, Site S (Ledermann 1999, enclosed plan).
However, the inventory of one of the adjacent rooms (Locus 3594) might point to the original function of the building. The finds include an only partially preserved bowl with zoomorphic applications on its rim, a complete fenestrated vessel and an intact small flask (Fig. 4). All these items may be associated with cultic activities (for a richly adorned chalice that was found in a clear domestic context in a room belonging to the Early Iron Age building complex [see above] for which a cultic function is suggested, see Faßbeck 2008, esp. 19; for a similar chalice mentioned by Faßbeck as yet unpublished [ibid. 24] that was found in a comparable context at Tel Rehov, see now Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2007, 212 [photo top left]).

While the flask (Fig. 4:3) is well embedded in the ceramic profile of Early Iron Age Kinneret, the bowl with zoomorphic applications and the fenestrated vessel are outstanding finds and call for a brief discussion.

3. A Kernos-like Bowl

The bowl originally had a diameter of c. 21 cm. Only about a ¼ of it could be located (Fig. 4:1). Plastically modeled protomes are attached to the rim (three of them are preserved). As the heads are worn and broken off,

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12 That is, the room beneath the eastern side of room 3578, belonging to the first occupational phase of the building, i.e. local phase N2.

13 Additionally, a fragment of a small metal ring was recorded in Room 3594 (Reg. no. 12322/1). The bronze ring originally had a diameter of 20.8 mm. The transverse section of the wire measures 2.6 mm. The weight of the fragment is 4 gr.

14 Reg. no. 12355/1; exterior color of clay: light red (2.5YR 7/6); color of core: light brown (7.5YR 6/3). The clay matrix is characterized by very little medium sized chalk and many small basalt grits. The 130 mm tall juglet is covered with a white slip (2.5Y 8/1) and decorated with dark gray concentric circles (10YR 3/1; information according to registrar Tuula Tynjä [Helsinki]). The vessel is typical for the main Early Iron Age horizon at Tel Kinrot. Residue analysis of its content is currently undertaken by Dr. Dvora Namdar (Weizmann Institute).

15 Reg. no. 06474/1 (the smaller fragment belonging to this bowl that was found outside Room 3594 was registered under Reg. no. 06603/1); exterior color of clay: reddish yellow (5YR 6/8); color of core: light yellowish brown (10YR 6/4). The clay matrix of the medium fired vessel is characterized by many black and some white small grits. The cyma-shaped profile of the small bowls is typical for the Early Iron Age assemblage of Tel Kinrot, cf. Tynjä in Pakkala et al. 2006, 332, Fig. 15. This type of bowl is dominant, e.g. at Megiddo, in Strata VI-B-A (Arie 2006, 193-94 with various parallels) or Yokneam, in Strata XVIII-XVII (Zarzecki-Peleg et al. 2005, 243-45, with many parallels).
these adornments are difficult to interpret (on decorated vessels with figures in relief dating to the Early Iron Age, cf. Finkelstein 1988, 287-91). While the first may be identified as a head either of a bull (similar to Late Bronze Age protomes attached to kernoi or kernos-like vessels from, e.g. Beth Shean [James and McGovern 1993, Fig. 92,1], Hazor [Yadin et al. 1961, pl. 260,25], Tel Nami [Artzy 1995, Fig. 2.7] or Lachish [Kletter 2004 with Figs 23.55,7, 23.56,13] among others. Iron Age I examples were found, e.g., at Gezer [Macalister 1912/III, pl. 124,8], Tell Qasile [Mazar 1980, Fig. 41b] or Beth Shean [Rowe 1940, pl. 20,21]) or a lion(ess) (similar to the handles of a krater that are stylized in shape of lionesses from Tell Dothan [cf. Master et al. 2005, Fig. 9.23,4; for a very similar pose of a lion, cf. also the model shrine from Tel Rehov cited below]; a lioness head is also attached on the outside of a cooking pot rim found at Shilo [Finkelstein 1993, Fig. 6.54,5]), the classification of the second is more problematic. It vaguely recalls the head of a horned animal, but no exact parallels can be cited.

Similar vessels dating to the Early Iron Age were found in the Central Hill Country, the Lower Galilee and the Jordan Rift Valley. The first to be mentioned is the so-called “Raddana Bowl”, a multi-handled krater dating to the terminal phase of the Iron Age I. It has a tubular rim and two spouts in shape of bovine heads (a similar concept is found on a jar from Gezer, cf. Macalister 1912/II, 68-70 with Fig. 264). Its excavators have interpreted this unique find as a cult object with possible parallels from Central Anatolia (Callaway and Cooley 1971, 15-19). Another comparable item was found at Tel Qishion. It is a bowl with a bull’s head facing to the outside functioning as a spout and with a similar head on the inside at the bottom of the vessel. A tube built into the vessel’s wall links the two protomes (Zori 1977, Fig. 46a; for a similar ‘device’ from Cyprus, cf. Laffineur 1997, Pl. XLVIII,5b). The last parallel to be cited is a bowl from Tell Deir ‘Allā with a plastically modeled lioness lying on its plain rim (Franken 1961, 370 with pl. 21)17.

The bowl with its zoomorphic applications bears a certain resemblance with kernoi.18 i.e. ring-shaped cult vessels that probably originate in Cyprus19. Kernoi became popular in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze and, especially, Early Iron Age. In the Southern Levant, they are typically found in Philistia, but they are also known elsewhere, including the Galilee (cf. the two examples from Horvat Rosh Zayit and Tur’an published by Gal 1993). The kernoi found in the Levant do not follow a standardized pattern; they can be tubular clay rings or bowls with tubular rims (on the latter cf. Mazar 1980, 106-08 with many examples), often with zoomorphic objects attached to them.

As the vessel found at Tel Kinrot - like the bowl from Tell Deir ‘Allā - does not have a hollow rim, it lacks the basic characteristic of kernoi and kernos bowls. Nevertheless, it still bears a close resemblance to them and may, thus, be interpreted a degenerated local variant thereof20.

4. SNAKE-HOUSES OR SHRINE MODELS?

Of particular interest is the globular, ring-based fenestrated vessel (32.5x25.5 cm) with two handles on both sides of a large (13.5x11 cm), fairly rectangular opening (Fig. 4:2; Faßbeck et al. 2003, 49-50). The handles

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16 See, e.g. a ram’s head on a handle from Shilo (Finkelstein 1993, Fig. 6.54,6). More distant comparanda found on kernoi are, e.g. an ibex head found in an Early Iron Age context at Tell Qasile (Mazar 1980, Fig. 41a), a ram head retrieved in an Iron Age II layer from Ashdod (Dothan and Freedman 1967, Fig. 47,7), or an animal with similarly twisted horns that was allegedly found at Samaria (Bignasca 2000, pl. 14 No. O200, see also Nos O43a, O44 and O50a for comparable Syrian items from Tell Bazi and Tell Judeide dating to the Late Bronze Age).

17 See also the hardly datable vessel with a similar decoration from Tell es-Safi (Bliss and Macalister 1902, Pl. 69,12). Additionally, a bowl with a schematic bull’s head that was found on the surface at En-Gev should be mentioned, which is very similar to the Tel Kinrot item (Mazar et al. 1964, 31 with Fig. 11,9 and Pl. 14E/F; we thank Katri Saarelainen [Helsinki] for pointing us to the last two references).

18 Equally, a certain similarity with metallic cauldrons with attached animal protomes on their rims, e.g., from Salamis and Altintepe (cf. the examples in Mittmann 2002, 6a-b) can be observed.

19 See Smith 2009, we thank Joanna Smith for the opportunity to reading the manuscript of her book before its publication; for a different view, see Bignasca 2000, 150-57.

20 Note that bowls with applied figures on their rims - often bulls and rams - are also known from Bronze Age Cyprus (see Karageorghis 1991, Pls CVII,1, CX,1, CXII,3-CXIX,1) and in the Hittite material culture of the early 2nd millennium BC (cf. e.g. Özgüç 2002, Nos 22-24), but they seem to be very rare (Müller-Karpe in ibid. 262).
allowed closing the vessel with a square lid, which in turn had a handle as well, by using a stick or the like in order to bolt it 21.

In the Levant, similar fenestrated clay vessels with a globular, cylindrical, or slightly conical form, with flat or ring-base, and a single, rectangular and relatively large opening, sometimes decorated and eventually with handles to close the opening with a slab, have been found at Ashkelon (MB II B; Fig. 5:1; Stager 2008, Figs 32.1-2 (= Fig. 5:1); cf. Muller 2002/II, 138, Fig. 132), Dan (IA I; Biran 1994, 152-53 with Figs 111 and 112.1 [= Fig. 5:2]), Tel Hadar (IA I; the vessel can be seen among the pottery assemblage from Tel Hadar stratum IV in Kochavi 1996, 191, photo 15; see also Kochavi and Yadin 2008, 1757), Tel Rehov (IA II; Mazar and Panitz-Cohen 2007, 210-211 with photo and Mazar 2008, 2015), one at each site, as well as four at Hazor (LB; Yadin et al. 1960, 109 with pls XXXV, 3; CXXIII, 4 [= Fig. 5:3] and CLXXVII, 6; Yadin et al. 1961, pl. CCLXXXII, 1; Yadin 1975, 90 [photo]), 22 four at Tell Deir ‘Allâ (LB; Franken 1992, Fig. 3-8.12 [= Fig. 5:4]; pl. 3e; Fig. 4-3.16; pl. 5c; Fig. 4-17; Fig. 4-24.14; Fig. 5-8.30; Fig. 11d; cf. Muller 2002/II, 144-45, Figs 139-141), six at Kamid el-Loz (LB; Metzger 1993, pl. 73-75 [Fig. 74 = Fig. 5:5]; Bretschneider 1991a, Taf. 79-82, Abb. 68-71; Muller 2002/II, 21.

Such a lid was indeed retrieved in Area N not far from the find spot of the fenestrated vessel (Reg. no. 06480/1, Locus 3531, local Stratum N1). Unfortunately, however, it must have belonged to another specimen as it does not fit the opening of the vessel discussed here.

Two further examples are published in Hesse 2008, 144, Fig. 4.6.A. Note that one of these items has a rectangular top view, but the otherwise typical handles to each side of the opening are present. Note that another fragment of a fenestrated vessel was retrieved in Area T (above Field II) in Locus 9010 (Reg. no. 10103/1). Due to the limited excavation area its context cannot be determined at present.

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107-111, Fig. 95-100) and two at Ugarit (LB; Schaeffer 1949, Figs 79.A-D and 79.1-4; cf. Muller 2002/II, 135, Figs 128-129 [=Fig. 5:6]). Significant counterparts to this type of object are provided by the numerous cylindrical vessels with a flat base, conical top, and a single rectangular opening produced on Crete and known from the Late Minoan period until the 7th century BC (Mersereau 1993, 23-45, Figs 8-35 [Fig. 10 = Fig. 5:7, Fig. 26 = Fig. 5:8]) as well as by the vase-like building models found at Kition, Cyprus, dating to the 11th century BC (Smith 2009, Figs 30a-c; cf. Bretschneider 1991a, Taf. 134, Figs 66-67). A similar cylindrical vessel with - like the items from Ashkelon and Ugarit - a knob on top of the roof and rectangular opening with door hinges and a lug to close it was found in a Late Bronze Age context at Tell Munbaqa in Northern Syria (Czichon and Werner 1998, 7 with Taf. 24-26).

At least at Hazor, Kamid el-Loz, Ashkelon, and Tell Deir ‘Allā, the fenestrated vessels have been found in cultic contexts, but their function is still at issue. Calling them “snake houses” goes back to Yigael Yadin’s suggestion that they were actually used to hold holy snakes in the context of a snake cult. He based this assumption on the fact that the spiral decoration on the vessel found at Ugarit could be interpreted as symbolizing a snake, and that a bronze item depicting a face (of a goddess?) flanked with snakes was found under the vessel found at Hazor (Yadin et al. 1960, pl. CLXXXI; cf. Keel 1992, 202 with Abb. 202-203). To be sure, snake figurines and other items with snake motifs have been found at Tel Kinrot (Faßbeck et al. 2003, 50-51 with Abb. 83a-b), Hazor (Yadin 1960, pls CCCIX, 8 and CCLXXVIII, 20; cf. the bowl onto the body of which a clay-sculptured snake was applied; see Yadin et al. 1961, pl. CXCVI, 13 and Yadin et al. 1989, 223; Keel 1992, 234, Abb. 186), and many other sites (see the inventory of the Syro-Palestinian snake iconography in Keel 1992, 195-266; see also Buchholz 2008), demonstrating that the snake was a prominent religious symbol even in the Early Iron Age in the Southern Levant as in the Near East in general.

However, the assumption of the fenestrated vessel as a snake-house is problematic for several reasons. First, there is no evidence of the use of living snakes in the Levantine worship. Secondly, if the purpose of this vessel really were to hold snakes, one would expect it to have perforations to allow air in it for the animal to breathe (such a putative “snake house,” a tube-like object (37x11x14 cm) with perforations has indeed been found in Enkomi, Cyprus; see Karageorghis 1972). Thirdly, and most importantly, the definition of the vessel type as a snake house rests on a very narrow basis. Some of the vessels are indeed decorated with snake motifs (the models from Ugarit and Tel Rehov have a decoration that can be interpreted as a snake; for further examples, see Muller 2002/1, 202; 2002/II, 139-142, Fig. 134 [Beth Shean, IA I]; 159, Fig. 156 [Tel Rekhesh, IA II]); this may indicate the significance of the snake as a religious symbol without necessarily defining the function of the object as a snake-house. The same can be said of the Hazor plaque, found under the vessel and possibly depicting a snake-goddess, which can hardly be used as a conclusive evidence for the fenestrated vessel as a snake-house.

While the interpretation of the fenestrated vessel as a snake-house, thus, remains improbable, another line of interpretation indeed suggests itself. Some scholars have interpreted the above-mentioned fenestrated vessel as shrine models. Béatrice Muller’s comprehensive survey of architectural models in the ancient Near East (Muller 2002/1 and 2002/II; cf. also Epstein 1989; Bretschneider 1991a; Muller 2001) provides a wide variation from very simple fenestrated vessels, that Muller calls “tabernacles” or “armoires,” to sophisticated and richly decorated building models. Muller includes the above-mentioned objects from Kamid el-Loz, Ugarit,

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23 Yadin 1975, 90. The fenestrated vessels should not be confused with another type of objects called snake-tubes. These were certainly not used to hold snakes but were rather used as cult stands for holding bowls filled with offering material; the name comes from their serpentine handles and their decoration with snake motifs. For the snake-tubes, see Gesell 1976; Keel 1992, 198-202 with Abb. 190-196; Day et al. 2006.

24 The evidence is compiled by Koh 1994; according to his inventory, the number of sites with snake objects decreases dramatically from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Generally on the topic, cf. Buchholz 2000. For a more distant Iron Age example from the Gulf area (ancient Oman), see Benoist 2007.

25 Thus Biran 1994, 153; Bretschneider 1991b; Daviau 2008, 298; Epstein 1989 (Dan); Franken 1964, 422; Kochavi et al. 1992, 38 (Tel Hadar); Mazor and Panitz-Cohen 2007, 211 (Tel Rehov). Cf. also Mersereau 1993, 45-47, who mentions the fenestrated vessels from Ugarit, Hazor, and Kamid el-Loz in the appendix to her article on the Cretan cylindrical models, without discussing their possible connection with the Cretan vessel type.
Ashkelon, and Tell Deir ‘Allā to her inventory (Muller 2002/I, 289-97 [nos 95-100; Kamid el-Loz]; 325-26 [nos 128-29; Ugarit]; 329 [no. 132; Ashkelon]; 338-39 [nos 139-41; Tell Deir ‘Allā]; cf. the respective figures in Muller 2002/II), defining them as “armoires” with a cultic context (Muller 2002/I, 138) except for that from Ugarit, in which case the context is unclear. The objects found at Tel Kinrot, Dan, Hazor, Tel Rehov, and Tel Hadar are not included in Muller’s inventory, but could be classified accordingly without any difficulty.

It is also noteworthy that the Bronze Age objects from Ugarit, Ashkelon, Tell Deir ‘Allā, and Hazor, as well as the Iron Age objects from Tel Kinrot, Dan, Rehov, and Tel Hadar share the roundish shape of the Cretan and Cypriot building models, as if they were influenced by them rather than the more realistic, building-like Mesopotamian type of architectural models. This assumption is plausible in view of the significant distribution of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery in the Late Bronze Age Cis- and Transjordan (e.g. Leonard 1985 [Transjordan] and 1994; Gilmour 1992; James and McGovern 1993/1, 247 [Beth Shean]; van Wijngaarden 2002, 31-124 [Ugarit, Hazor and Tell Deir ‘Allā]; Hesse 2008 [Hazor]) - including the kernoi (Mazar 1980, 111) - and becomes all the more probable if the cylindrical shape of the models is originally a Cretan invention (Mersereau 1993).

The distribution of the fenestrated vessels coincides with sites where substantial amounts of Mycenaean pottery have been found (Ugarit, Kamid el-Loz, Dan, Hazor, Tell Deir ‘Allā). However, the relatively coarse design of the vessels, incomparable with the high quality of the Mycenaean repertoire, indicates that they are imitated rather than imported. “In imitation, the aesthetic considerations were not the major factor and there seems to have been a strong tendency to adapt the foreign forms to the local tradition.” (Hesse 2008, 45).

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the fenestrated vessels from Cis- and Transjordan known so far are seemingly - apart from the considerably earlier item from Ashkelon - a phenomenon that is limited to the northern part of Jordan Rift Valley. This fact indeed suggests that they are an indicator for regionally restricted cultic practices, which might have been introduced through northern contacts that are otherwise attested as well (e.g. Kochavi et al. 1992, 38; Ilan 1999, 209; Hesse 2008, 176-87; Mazar 2008, 2018; Münger in press, esp. note 79).

But why should the fenestrated vessel from Tel Kinrot be characterized as an architectural model and not simply a container - if not for snakes, then for some other items (thus Faßbeck et al. 2003, 50)? According to Rebecca Mersereau, “the answers lie in understanding these [i.e. Cretan] models not as replicas of any actual structure but as symbols of an architectural space, a space whose significance related to what happened therein or who inhabited the space rather than the physical form of the structure itself.” (Mersereau 1993, 8-9; cf. also Smith 2009, chapter 3). Indeed, many of the architectural models in the Eastern Mediterranean have been found with figurines inside them representing the inhabitants of the miniaturized space within the model (cf. Fig. 5:8, see also Fig. 5:1). A key element of the model is the opening that allows the communication between the worlds within and outside the model, marking the liminal space between the world of those looking through it and those residing inside the modeled space: “A doorway could have been meant as a portal into or out of another world” (Smith 2009, 126). Even the ring-shaped kernos can be interpreted as a cosmological model (Bignasca 2000, 172-93, 254-58; Smith 2009, chapter 3) that, found in the same context with the shrine model, endorses the understanding of the fenestrated vessel as a ritual object.

5. Summary

Due to the architecture and the lack of prevalent cultic paraphernalia, the pillared courtyard-building in «Field I» at Tel Kinrot does not deserve to be called a temple (for criteria of what kind of a structure can be called a temple, see Zwickel 1994, 8-16). Nevertheless, two bone deposits detected in its patio may have been leftovers from sacrificial practices. Moreover, the assemblage of objects, all found in one of the adjacent rooms (Locus 3594), suggests a cultic function of the building. The finds included a fenestrated vessel, which is best explained as a shrine model typical of the Jordan Rift Valley, a peculiar kernos-like bowl and a flask. All these items can be interpreted as belonging to an assemblage of ritual objects. This strongly points towards a religious function of the pillared courtyard-building embedded in a domestic neighborhood reflecting a highly organized and
economically cross-linked society at the turn of the second to the first millennium BC.

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