Kinneret and Early Iron Age Chronology

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1. Introduction.

The preliminary report¹ on Kinneret 1994-1999 – though undoubtedly one of the best that V. Fritz ever co-authored – demonstrates well the fallacies into which stubborn adherence to the traditional chronology, insufficient recording, categorization of features without a theoretical background in social/historical anthropology and, last but not least, a Bible-based vision of Israel/Palestine's ancient history can lead. Its discussion is, therefore, of methodological interest.

Deficiencies in data-pocessing are evident on p. 5, Abb. 2, where the Stratum V walls of the 1994-1999 excavations are combined with the «Stratum V» walls of the 1982-1985 seasons. If ever proof were needed that the two stratigraphies do not match, it is this plan which shows dense occupation in the living quarters – and an empty acropolis. In *Kinneret 1*, the early Iron Age strata were not only wrongly identified, they were also wrongly synchronized. The identifications are meanwhile corrected as follows:

Stratum	Fritz 1990 (Kinneret I)	Fritz & Münger 2002
VI	village, Iron I (12 th /11 th centuries	city, Iron IB (11 th century)
V	city, Iron IIA (David)	city, Iron IB (11 th century)
IV	city, Iron IIA (Solomon)	squatter occupation, Iron IB (11 th /10 th centuries

It is in the cases of Strata VI and IV that the discrepancies of the two Kinneret stratigraphies are most obvious. In the light of the 1994-1999 excavations, the 1982-1985 strata should be re-arranged:

Area	Kinneret I Stratum	Kinneret II Stratum
A	VI	VI
	V	VB
	IV	VA
B	IV	V
C	V	V
al-la-maintena	IV	IV
E.	IV	V
E ₁ E ₂	V	VI
	IV	V
E ₃	V	VI
	IV	V

Evidently, whoever is responsible for Abb. 5 has not done his or her homework, and did not realize the problem even when faced with its graphic expression. – Subphases of Stratum V are indicated in the plan of Area K (p. 13, Abb. 4), but not in the plan of Areas J/N/R/S (p. 15 Abb. 5). The ideosyncrasies (and imprecisions) of the excavator's terminology (indicating the absence of a consistent interpretative theory) might be illustrated by the following comparative table (EB not regarded):

¹ V. Fritz & S. Münger, Vorbericht über die zweite Phase der Ausgrabungen in Kinneret (Tell el- Orēme) am See Gennesaret, 1994-1999: ZDPV 118 (2002) 2-32.

Stratum	Period (Fritz)	Nature (Fritz)	Period (Knauf)	Nature (Knauf)
I	8. Jh. v. Chr. (Eisenzeit II)	Nachbesiedlung auf dem südwest-lichen Teil der Kuppe	Ir IIB/III (late 8 th / early 7 th centuries)	hamlet
II	8. Jh. v. Chr. (Eisenzeit II)	Stadt auf der Kuppe zerstört durch Tiglatpil- eser III.	Ir IIB (8 th century)	fortress ² of Jeroboam II.; destroyed in 733; 1.4 ha.
Ш	9. Jh. v. Chr. (Eisenzeit II)	Festung auf dem nördlichen Teil der	Ir IIA (9 th century) ³	tower
IV	11./10. Jh. v. Chr. (Eisenzeit I)	Kuppe Nachbesiedlung auf dem gesamten Hügel	Ir 1/II (late 10 th / early 9 th cent-uries)	squatter occupation on the ruins of V
V	11. Jh. v. Chr. (Eisenzeit I)	befestigte Stadt auf dem gesamten Hügel	Ir IC (10 th century)	city ⁴ , ca. 9 ha.
VI	11. Jh. v. Chr. (Eisenzeit I)	befestigte Stadt auf dem gesamten Hügel	Ir IC (late 11 th / early 10 th cent-uries)	city, ca. 9 ha.
VII	15. Jh. v. Chr. (Spätbronzezeit I)	befestigte Stadt unbekannter Ausdehnung auf dem gesamten Hügel	LB IA (15 th century)	town/fortress, ca. 9 ha.
VIII	16. Jh. v. Chr. (Mittelbronzezeit IIC / Spätbronze-zeit I)	befestigte Stadt unbekannter Ausdehnung auf dem gesamten Hügel	MB III (16 th century)	town/fortress, ca. 9 ha.

It is most curious that the 9th century watchtower is attributed a stratum of its own (Stratum III), whereas the Persian period «Open Court Building» in Area A is not (in addition, 9th century pottery has not been recorded anywhere on the site, whereas a thin scatter of Persian period ceramics is attested from top-soil all over the tell).

2. The ¹⁴C date for Stratum VI.

An olive pit from Stratum VI 6 is dated 1120/995 cal BC with a probability of 68.3 % (p. 12) – ie, its true date lies outside this range with a probability of 31.7 %. The date as given is nearly useless. Because the BP date and its standard deviation are not indicated (which constitutes a case of unprofessional behaviour on the part of the author[s] 7), the reader is impeded in calculating the 2σ range (95 % probability) on her/his own. That Stratum VI might date back into the late 12^{th} /early 11^{th} century is excluded by the pottery assemblage. The 14 C date places Stratum VI and thus, the foundation of the Iron I city, at the end of the 11^{th} or the beginning of the 10^{th} centuries. For Stratum V, then, only a 10^{th} century date remains possible.

² Cf. E.A. Knauf, Festungen: RGG⁴ IV (2000) 100.

³ Dated as stratigraphic sandwich; there exists, however, one (previously unidentified) 9th-century sherd (Iron IIA) from a Stratum-III fill (Kinneret I Plate 60:1).

⁴ The classification as either «town» or «city» reflects the site's position in the settlement hierarchy of the time.
⁵ It is beyond my comprehension how a site can cover a whole slope of known dimensions and still be of «unknown dimensions».

⁶ It is not stated whether the pit from which the organic material derives belongs to the foundation or the duration of Stratum VI

⁷ And thus continues the abuse of ¹⁴C data from V. Fritz, Kinneret: Excavations at Tell el-Oreimeh (Tel Kinrot). Preliminary Report on the 1994-1997 Seasons, TA 26 (1999) 92-115, 112 (cf. E.A. Knauf, ThZ 57 [2001] 267 n. 19), where the locus in question is attributed to «Stratum 2» (= Stratum V of 2002).

3. Megiddo VIA/B and Kinneret VI and V.

According to Fritz & Münger⁸, Kinneret VI is contemporary with Megiddo VIB, and the end of Kinneret V predates the destruction of Megiddo VIA. The first statement is most probably wrong, and the second proposition is unfounded by the evidence as presently available. I present my own revision first:

Period	Date	Philistine Pottery	Megiddo	Kinneret
Iron IA	1150/25-1100/1075	monochrome	-gap-	-gap
Iron IB	1100/1075-1000/975	bichrome	VIB	Kinneret Harbor?
Iron IC9	1000/975-925/900	decadent	VIA	VI
				V
	950-900		destruction	abandonment

(Fritz &) Münger date Kinneret VI to the Iron IB on the basis of one Philistine bichrome sherd from a Stratum V fill Area G (p. 12)¹⁰. That the piece «kann nur aus Stratum VI stammen» would only be true if the tell or its immediate vicinity were void of any other Iron I settlement activity. But this is not the case: salvage and rescue soundings – with insufficient means and funds – by the IAA have shown that there was also settlement activity outside the tell in the region where Kinneret's harbor is to be expected. Even if the exact dates for the foundation, duration and termination of Kinneret Harbor are unknown (p. 12), the one Philistine sherd should be attributed to Kinneret Harbor rather than Tel Kinrot VI for two reasons¹¹: (a) We all agree that the impetus for the foundation of Kinneret VI came from the east (which does not mean that its population consisted of immigrant only), and the establishment of the harbor should have preceded, then, the establishment of the city; (b) among the thousands, if not tenthousands of Stratum VI sherds from later fills which have been collected, washed, «read» and thrown out between 1982 and 1999¹², not a single Philistine sherd is reported. There might remain another problem, not to be discussed on the basis of the evidence as presently available: can any fill from Area G be attributed to Stratum V?

The assumption that Kinneret V ended before Megiddo VIA is based on the presence of decadent Philistine ware and collared-rim jars at Kinneret and their absence at Megiddo (p. 18). Even if this statement were true, it would not be conclusive, given the very high degree of regional variation in the Iron I period. Evidently, there are also differences in the pottery assemblages of Kinneret (center) and Tel Hadar (satellite) in the same period, and there can be no doubt that both sites belonged to the same political system and had a completely

⁹ The necessity to re-introduce an Iron Age IC is well illustrated by the difficulties which T. Dothan had in fitting the «decadent Philistine» pottery into the traditional chronology; cf. (Fritz &) Münger, ZDPV 118, 17 with n. 24.

 10 I do not understand the reference in n. 17 to n. 11 which speaks about MB III pottery in Stratum VI fills. Is this to mean that the fill in the glacis should be attributed to VI rather than V, or deals n. 11 with V rather than VI?

¹¹ Of course, it might as well originate from a trader's in Philistine pottery (en route for Dan VI) having had his *siesta* under a tree on the still unoccupied tell, who after discovering a cracked piece among his merchandise left the specimen where he had rested his head ...

¹² Of the estimated 200-300,000 sherds processed, 3 % should derive from Stratum V if nothing but topsoil would have been excavated (calculated on the basis of [estimated settlement extension x estimated duration per period]; pre-VI and post-IV strata have been overestimated in this calculation, compared to the known occurrences of their material in the assemblages, and Stratum VI has only be given a duration of half a generation). As, however, numerous fills of Stratum V containing predominantly Stratum VI material have been excavated, it stands to reason that more than 10,000 Stratum VI sherds have passed under the eyes of the pottery readers. If the Philistine bichrome sherd is attributed to Stratum VI, Philistine pottery would represent less than 0.01 % of its pottery population.

⁸ ZDPV 118, 12 and 18.

synchronized history in Iron IC. But the statement is simply not true: decadent Philistine pottery has already been published from Megiddo VIA^{13} , as has a collared-rim jar from Megiddo VB^{14} (!) – which leads one to expect that similar jars from Megiddo VIA will be published sooner or later.

For the time being, it is perfectly possibly that Kinneret V was abandoned before Megiddo VIA was destroyed, but the opposite is equally possible. The question cannot be decided by further analysis of the Megiddo and Kinneret sequences alone, but only by a multivariant analysis of a sufficient number of sites from northern Israel, once their ceramic evidence is available.

4. Did David destroy Kinneret VA?

Fritz concludes, after correctly joining those of us who maintain that Iron I Kinneret was an Aramaean site for a couple of years¹⁵ (p. 20, the translation is mine): «In this case, the destruction of the city at the end of the 11th century BC could have been caused by the Israelites, who subdued Aramaean territory also in the course of state formation under David (2 Sam 8:3-8). In any case it cannot be excluded that the destruction of the Stratum V city was due to the expansion of the Davidic empire». These bold statements presuppose (1) that the biblical chronology which attributes a reign of 40 years to both David and Solomon is correct, and David started to rule between 1011 and 1004; (2) that the Aramaeans mentioned in 2 Sam 8:3-8 included the Aramaeans who lived at Kinneret; (3) that David accomplished the defeat of these Aramaeans in the first 4 (or 11) years of his reign.

Ad 1: It is now largely accepted that the «40 years» of David and Solomon indicate the lack of annalistic data for the true length of their reigns ¹⁶. The historical David and Solomon together might easily have been in power for less than 40 years ¹⁷.

Ad 2: The only Aramaeans defeated by David in 2 Sam 8:3-8 are the Aramaeans of Zobah (Beth Rehob in Lebanon)¹⁸. Kinneret was, in all probability, the capital of Geshur¹⁹. With

¹³ Megiddo III 263 fig. 11.14:4; cf. also (Fritz &) Münger, ZDPV 118, 17 n. 24.

¹⁴ Megiddo III 282 fig. 11.28:3; the pithos 250 fig. 11.4:11 might belong to the collared-rim class (rim missing), cf. ibid. 253f, with a probability of $^{n}/_{m}$, n being the number of collared-rim pithoi from Megiddo VIA after the present expedition's completion of excavating and processing its VIA-pottery, m the number of other pithoi from the same stratum. What can already be stated with confidence: $^{n}/_{m} > 0$.

¹⁵ Cf. I. Finkelstein, State Formation in Israel and Judah: A Contrast in Context, A Contrast in Trajectory. NEA 62 (1999) 35-52, 47; id., BASOR 314 (1999) 55-70, 59f.

¹⁶ Cf. D.V. Edelman, Saul: ABD V (1992), 989-999, 992f; id., Saul ben Kish in History and Tradition: V.Fritz & P.R. Davies ed., The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States (JSOT.S 228; 1996) 142-159; J.H. Hayes & J.M. Miller, Israelite and Judaean History (1977) 679; G.W. Ahlström, The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaelolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest, ed. D. Edelman (SJOT.S 146; 1993), 501 and n. 2; H.M. Niemann, Herrschaft, Königtum und Staat (FAT 6; 1993) 4 with n. 16; 13 with n. 57; 22 with n. 90; E.A. Knauf, King Solomon's Copper Supply: E.Lipiński ed., Phoenicia and the Bible: Studia Phoenicia XI (1991) 167-186, 172-174; id., Die Umwelt des Alten Testaments (NSK-AT 29; 1994), 22; H. Donner, Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen 1 (ATD.E 4/1; ³2000) 259f.

¹⁷ The most intelligent defense of long reigns for David and Solomon, B. Halpern, David's Secret Demons (2001) 229-242, presupposes that nearly everything narrated in 2 Sam and 1 Kings 1-11 did actually happen (to a certain degree, at least). This is very unlikely, e.g. in the case of the Queen of Sheba, but also in other instances (cf. *infra*, notes 18 and 23). In addition to Halpern's calculation of the life expectancy of Judaen kings, I calculated the probability for a king of Israel and Judah (as enumerated in Kgs) to have ruled for 40 years; it is 0.007, and the probability for two kings of 40 years-reigns in succession, is 0.00005.

¹⁸ Aram-Damascus in 8:5f interrupts the Zobah-account. It is a literary additon from a time when Damascus had become prominent (i.e., from the 9th century) and contradicts the more reliable note on the origins of the Damascene state in 1 Kings 11,23f. The military confrontation with Zobah took place in Transjordan, not in Galilee (Halpern, Demons, 167-195; 347). As the presently discussed sad example shows, it is inadvisible to enter into speculations about David's probable or possible deeds or misdeeds without consulting Halpern's Demons, the standard-work for years to come.

Geshur David was on the best of terms (2 Sam 3:3)²⁰. To interpret Joab's mission to Geshur (in order to conduct Absalom back home from the court of his grandfather, 2 Sam 14:23) as a military campaign would contradict Jos 13:13. According to this reference, Geshur was peacefully integrated into Israel (but not necessarily already by the time of David). In any case, Joab's mission can by no means be dated to the 11th century²¹.

Ad 3: An 11th century campaign against any Aramaeans, and especially against the Aramaeans of Geshur, is simply impossible even according to a most conservative reading of the biblical narrative. If there ever was a chance for one of David's armies to destroy, pillage and plunder Kinneret, it would have been in the course of Sheba's pursuit at the very end of David's reign²². It is, however, highly doubtful if the royal army, in this case, ever penetrated into the regions north of Benjamin²³. In this case again, only a (moderately) low chronology could bring Kinneret and David together. But the main point is: David never conquered and destroyed Kinneret VA, because, according to the archaeological record, Kinneret VA was never destroyed by conquest at all.

5. The end of Kinneret VA.

The life of a stratum might be terminated by military destruction, earthquake or abandonment. Which of these three possibilities applies to Kinneret VA?

If you find destruction debris (characterized by charcoal, ashes and partly or completely baked mudbrick fragments), and under the debris skeletons with arrow points in their spines, spear-blades in their chests, and skuils cleft by sharp heavy instruments, you are most probably excavating the remains of a military conquest. Without dead bodies, a willful destruction is much harder to prove. Of course one could imagine that the people were deported, the houses pillaged, and the city then burned. In the case of Kinneret V, there was no pillaging, because household inventories were found under the debris in some rooms (other rooms were empty²⁴), including objects of precious metal (p. 19f). There is also no destruction debris²⁵ on Stratum V floors, but some in Stratum V fills, indicating that the earthquake which destroyed Stratum VI also caused some fire(s) as earthquakes usually do. The baked mudbrick wall in Area K (p. 14) could thus be easily explained. There is, however, an obstacle to this explanation: if the fire that produced the baked wall broke out during the final destruction of Stratum V, where is the charcoal? And where is the radiocarbon date on it?? If, as I assume from the report, the area surrounding the baked wall was clean of charcoal and ashes, the fire must have occurred during the lifespan of the stratum (and having been extinguished by the inhabitants, the damage was repaired).

The complete household assemblages under the mudbrick collapse are in favor of another earthquake²⁶ causing the termination of Stratum V – and possibly also the conflagration which

¹⁹ E.A. Knauf, Kinneret and Naftali: A. Lemaire & M. Sæbø ed., Congress Volume Oslo 1998 (VT.S 80; 2000) 219-233, 228f.

²⁰ For the political ratio behind the fact (making a hostile act against Geshur on David's part very unlikely indeed), cf. Halpern, Demons, 233f; 315f.

²¹ Cf. Halpern, Demons, 238f.

²² Cf. Halpern, Demons, 355. Within the framework of Halpern's reconstruction, destruction layers in Galilee could be attributed to the Absalom revolt (Demons, 376-378).

²³ Sheba's revolt is a tenth-century feature in 2 Sam 20, but Abel-Beth-Maacah probably belongs to the ninth century; cf. E.A. Knauf, The Oueens' Story; lectio difficilior 2/2002 (www.lectio.unibe.ch).

²⁴ Whether this fact indicates partial abandonment or spatial differentiation within houses is subject for further reflection and study.

²⁵ Fritz & Münger do not differentiate between «destruction debris» and «collapse» in violation of present standards in recording and interpretation.

²⁶ It is, paradoxically, more likely that a severe earthquake is followed by another severe quake rather than a mild one, cf. M. Buchanan, Ubiquity (2000). Hopefully, the earthquake theory will be tested by seismologists, at least

ended Tel Hadar IV. Alternatively, the population fled in such a panic that they left a considerable amount of their household goods behind and never returned, because the settlers of Stratum IV established themselves on top of the debris covering VA, and a considerable gap should then separate VA and IV²⁷. One can imagine that people fled when they saw Tel Hadar going up in flames (*if* Tel Hadar was destroyed by conquest), but in this case, the aggressor would have come from the east (cf. 1 Kgs 15:20). Again, this scenario is less likely than the earthquake hypothesis, because the pottery of Stratum IV seems to continue Stratum V ceramics. This implies that Kinneret was already in full decline (and gradual abandonment) when the VA-earthquake struck; the survivors returned to their site, but they did not have the economical power and technical means anymore to rebuild it. The lifespan of Kinneret VI and V can be estimated at one generation or less for Stratum VI (city construction might not have been completed when the first earthquake struck) and two to three generations for Stratum V (two generations attested by the A-B phasing, and a possible third for the assumed period of decline when building activities had already ceased). The duration of the Iron IC city can then be calculated as 60-100 years.

For historians who are willing to listen to what archaeology has to say, there are much more intereresting features to be found in the span between the 11^{th} and the 9^{th} centuries BCE than David and his ignominious career.

at Tel Hadar; for archeo-seismology, cf. Sh. Marco & A. Agnon, Armageddon Quakes: Revelations from Megiddo 6 (2002) 3-4 (also accessible by www.tau.ac.il/~archpubs/index.html).

²⁷ Considerable enough for the houses to collapse naturally, cf. Gh. Ziadeh-Seely, Abandonment and Site Formation Processes: An Ethnographic and Archaeological Study: T. Kaplan ed., Archaeology, History and Culture in Palestine and the Near East. Essays in Memory of Albert E. Glock (ASOR Books 3; 1999) 127-150.