

Wine Shipments to Samaria from Royal Vineyards

MATTHEW J. SURIANO

University of Maryland

The Samaria Ostraca contain a subset of receipts that record wine shipments from what were evidently royal vineyards. But this particular group of ostraca has been largely overlooked in the study of the Northern Kingdom, probably resulting from the fact that not all of the ostraca were published in the *editio princeps*. This article presents a new edition of these ostraca, accompanied by an analysis of their particular features. The results of the analysis confirm that the wine shipments were the privileged possession of the king of Israel.

KEYWORDS Ancient Israel, Samaria, Samaria ostraca, Northern Kingdom, Israelite kingship, Epigraphy, Northwest Semitic inscriptions

A small number of the Samaria Ostraca, first discovered in 1910, appear to record shipments from vineyards to the king of Israel. Remarkably, despite their distinct formula, discrete characteristics and historical potential, the subset has elicited only a few comments (Noth 1927: 226–227, n. 3; Rainey 1982: 52).¹ This study seeks to address the issue by producing a new edition of the vineyard ostraca from the tenth year. The edition will list the features of the ostraca, classified as Type III, and provide comments on their contents in order to highlight the implications these sources hold for studying the socio-political history of the Kingdom of Israel.

The reason the Type III ostraca have been overlooked thus far is due, in part, to the publication history of the Samaria Ostraca (siglum = *Samr*). In the *editio princeps*, George Andrew Reisner was unable to read some of the sherds; therefore two of the Type III vineyard shipments remained unrecognized (Reisner, Fisher and Lyon 1924: 227–246; Nos.

¹ Martin Noth's important work on the Samaria Ostraca was published in 1927, before Kaufman's 1966 reanalysis, while Anson Rainey's article (1982) focused on the *lamelekh*-seals and the Southern Kingdom. But this is typical of current Samaria Ostraca research, as most studies will devote only a few words regarding the vineyards. No study has exhaustively surveyed their uniqueness, nor has any contrasted their features with the other typological groups. Moreover, it is often assumed that they are basically the same as Type I.

3892 and 3893). Yet Reisner recognized the distinctive nature of the vineyard shipments in Nos. 53–55 (‘form [1]’ in Reisner n.d.: 7). Ivan Kaufman’s subsequent edition (1966), which was based on his work with the artefacts in Istanbul, utilized infrared photography to reanalyze and correct older translations, producing new editions of ostraca that could not be read with the naked eye. As a result, Kaufman’s edition revealed two additional Type III vineyard shipments (now Nos. 72–73).² But while the enhanced edition provided new references to vineyards, Kaufman did not treat them separately. Instead he conflated them along with the other ostraca from the tenth year in his chronologically based typology (as Type I).³ Subsequent studies have affirmed the distinctiveness of these ostraca, and following Renz (1995a: 18) they should be organized in a separate category: Type III.⁴

Characteristics of the Type III ostraca

Among the nine ostraca that mention vineyards, six are dated to the ‘tenth year’ and exhibit two or more of the following Type III features:

1. The omission of the prepositional formulations מִ (‘from...’) and לְ (‘to...’), and by extension the absence of a *lāmēd*-man (or any other personal name).⁵
2. Reference to one of two vineyards: כַּרְמֵ תֵּל (‘Vineyard of the Tell’) and כַּרְמֵ יְחֻעֵלִי (‘Vineyard of Yəḥāw‘ēlī’).
3. A record of shipment that lists wine and ‘a jar of washed oil’ (נבל שמן רהצ) syntactically joined using the prepositional בְּ .

² Following Kaufman’s work, André Lemaire (1977: 21–81) renumbered the additional ostraca. For other editions, see those of David Diringer (1934: 21–68), Johannes Renz (1995a: 79–109; 1995c: 5–11), Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow and Whitaker (2004: 339–396) and Shmuel Aḥituv (2008: 258–310). Full translations are also included in broader studies of historical-geography (Aharoni 1979: 358–362) and socio-economic history (Schloen 2001: 156–158, Table 4). See also the selected translations of the ostraca, notably W.F. Albright (1969: 211), Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig (1966, 1968, 1969; = *KAI* 183–187), and J.C.L. Gibson (1971: 5–13). A selected edition will be included in a supplemental volume of *Context of Scripture* (Suriانو forthcoming).

³ Kaufman (1982: 231; 1992: 921–922) established the two-part typology based on the dating system, which remains the foundation for most work on the Samaria ostraca. Type I consists of either the ‘ninth year’ or ‘tenth year’, written with an ordinal number. Type II ostraca are dated to ‘Year 15’ (15 שָׁנָה) where the year is marked with a hieratic number. Kaufman recognized the diversity in his Type I, and created several sub-categories (Types I *a*, *b* and *c*), except for the vineyard shipments. Kaufman’s reasons for this exception may have been due to his belief that the vineyard ostraca were copies rather than collections of individual records (Kaufman 1966: 142, 145), specifically, *Samr* 20’s similarity to 73 and *Samr* 53’s similarity to 54 and 72. But this theory is difficult to accept. It is reasonable to assume that the contents of the ostraca were copied into a master ledger, probably written on perishable materials (Rainey 1979: 92); but it makes less sense that the contents of one ostrakon would be recorded onto another potsherd, only to be discarded together.

⁴ The typology developed by Hermann Niemann (2008: 254–255; cf. 1993: 79–80), which is much more extensive than other studies, also classifies the vineyard texts separately (his Type 11).

⁵ This term refers to a personal name with an attached לְ preposition in Types I and II. The meaning of the Samaria Ostraca depends upon how this preposition is interpreted, thus affecting the individual’s function as either owner or recipient of the recorded shipments, see nn. 14 and 15 (below).

Of the other three ostraca,⁶ *Samr* 60 simply reads ‘Vineyard of Yəḥāw‘ēlī’, and *Samr* 58 along with 61 are dated to Year 15. The last two (*Samr* 58, 61) are often included with Type II because of their date, yet both are anomalous. *Samr* 61 is odd because the origin of shipment is listed before the dating formula (with no referenced *lāmēd*-man), whereas No. 58 is the only ostrakon that references both a *lāmēd*-man and a vineyard.⁷

The absence of *lāmēd*-men in the tenth year receipts (Nos. 20, 53–55, and 72–73) is significant in light of the fact that the Samaria Ostraca list shipments received inside Samaria’s royal acropolis (Kaufman 1966: 101–110; and 1982: 231–233; Tappy 2001: 496–503). This context leads to interrelated assumptions: the implied recipient of the Type III ostraca was the king of Israel,⁸ and the exclusive sources of supply (the vineyards) were his property (Lyon 1911: 139; Noth 1927: 226–227; cf. Noth 1932: 58–63; Mettinger 1971: 89–92; Rainey 1979: 91–92; and Niemann 2008: 249, 255). Importantly, these ostraca were not written haphazardly. Five of the six reveal a specific form that lists the wine in construct with the vineyard, followed by the statement, ‘a jar of washed oil’.

In order to establish the formulaic structure of Type III, the edition presented below collates and transliterates the texts, providing translation, artefact information and a scaled facsimile. The last point (image) has been deemed necessary due to the relative inaccessibility of the vineyard ostraca, as well as the fact that drawings of two of the ostraca have never been published. Reisner could not read *Samr* 72–73, and he drew only four of the Type III ostraca (*Samr* 20, 53–55). Furthermore, Reisner’s drawings were imprecise, and his reconstruction of *Samr* 20 incorrectly follows the Type I formulary, replete with a \rightarrow for an unspecified *lāmēd*-man (see Figure 1; cf. Plate 3 below).⁹

Thus the number and nature of the vineyard texts were obscured and unrecognized in their initial publication. Although some of these problems were provisionally resolved in Kaufman’s edition, he did not provide line drawings to go with his enhanced photographs. Therefore, it is necessary to produce an edition that graphically demonstrates the Type III ostraca in order to clarify the issues involved in their written form as well as in their reconstruction.

⁶ This study excludes *Samr* 56 and 99 from the Type III category. Although they record a place name called ‘the Tell’ (תֵּל), there is no additional reference to a vineyard (see No. 56: ‘In Year 15. From the T[ell], to Nimshi’). Both ostraca are broken, and the reading of the toponym is uncertain (Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow and Whitaker 2004: 378–379 and 388–389).

⁷ The *lāmēd*-man (יָדֵי= Bedeah?), however, appears only in this ostrakon.

⁸ The ostraca do not mention the name of any specific king, though monarchy is implied in the dating formula (Lemaire 1998: 58–62; Suriano 2014: 5–7). The general consensus is to count the years consecutively (Year 9–10 and 15) and attribute them to Jeroboam II (Kaufman 1966: 132–134; Renz 1995a: 86; Schloen 2001: 159; and Rollston 2006: 52 [see n. 15]; 2010: 67). Benjamin Mazar (1986: 179–182 [= Maisler 1948] argued for Jehoahaz, but this is probably too early. Rainey (1988: 69–74; followed by Dijkstra 2000: 84–85) proposed an alternative dating system based on the theory of co-regencies in ancient Israel. He suggested that the years were concurrent rather than consecutive, and attributed the Type II (Year 15) to Joash and the Type I to Jeroboam II (Years 9 and 10).

⁹ Kaufman (1966: 136–137) corrected Reisner’s reconstruction, removing the \rightarrow and reconstructing יָדֵי at the end of *Samr* 20: 1. His re-interpretation, however, presents other difficulties (see n. 13).

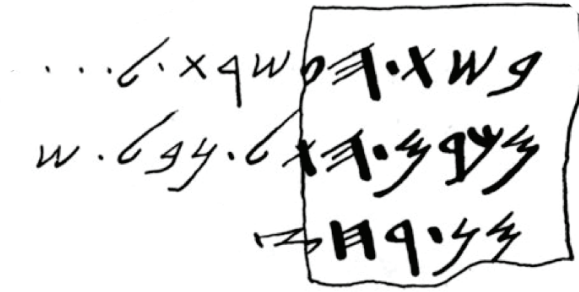


FIGURE 1 Reisner's drawing of *Samr* 20 (Reisner, Fisher and Lyon 1924: 240).

The drawings presented here were created electronically, based on the digitized photographs of Reisner and Kaufman, retrieved through the Inscriptifactor Digital Image Library of the University of Southern California's West Semitic Research Project.¹⁰ They should be used with caution since they are based on photographs, not on the actual artefacts which are currently in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.¹¹ The drawings serve a heuristic purpose, illustrating the issues involved in reconstructed readings. But they also add clarity to the material form of the Samaria Ostraca. Neither Reisner nor Kaufman provided the dimensions of the individual ostraca, and both used different rulers in their photographs. Thus, the images here are presented with an accompanying scale.¹² This feature is important because questions have been raised regarding whether there would have been enough space on the sherd fragments (*Samr* 20 and 73) for the full Type III formulary. Careful inspection of the digital images, however, shows that the average length of the (complete) Type III ostraca is ~12.6 cm, offering sufficient space. The shape and size of each sherd is of course a matter of conjecture, but the drawings provided here support reconstructing *Samr* 20 and 73 based on the form and content of *Samr* 53–54 and 72.¹³

¹⁰ The database is accessible online at: <http://www.inscriptifactor.com/index.shtml>

¹¹ Because of the caution necessary in reconstructing epigraphic texts from photographs, each plate provides the database information for the specific digitized image that was used for the drawing. The excavation information for each artefact is listed as well.

¹² I am particularly grateful to Marilyn Lundberg for her help in establishing the photographs' scale.

¹³ Note that there is a point of disagreement regarding the first letter in line 2 of *Samr* 20. Reisner (followed by others) read it as {מ}, interpreting it as a preposition affixed to place name (מכרמ.התל). The preferable alternative is to read the letter as a {נ} that is overlapping a word divider (Lemaire 1977: 32). Kaufman (1966: 358) ruled out this possibility because he felt that the marking on the left side of the letter slanted in the wrong direction for a word divider. Yet this objection is hardly convincing in light of the irregular form of the word dividers (see, e.g., *Samr* 53). Nor is the observation supported by the ambiguity of the writing. A closer inspection of Kaufman's photograph reveals that the letter is peculiarly shaped for a {מ}, as the top left-stroke arches upwards rather than the typical downwards slant. Thus, there are two choices in the reading of *Samr* 20's second line: a defectively written {מ}, or a defectively written word-divider (possibly consisting of two marks) that overlaps with a {נ}.

TABLE 1
A new edition of the ostraca

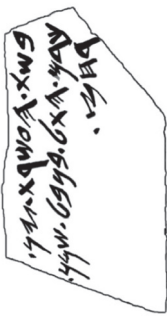
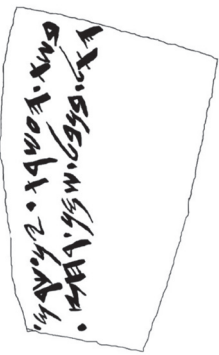
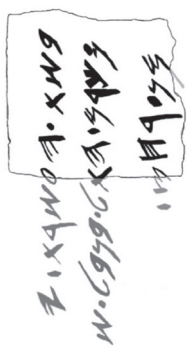
Fig.	Samr no.	Transliteration	Translation	Image and Excavation information
2	53	<p>בשת העשרת יג. כרמ.הקל.בבל.שמן. רזש.</p> 	In the tenth year, wine of the Vineyard of the Tell in a jar of washed / oil.	<p><i>Image:</i> Digital Object No.: ISF_DO_6815 Photo ID No.: OS_HSMSA2_397B_f Photographer: G.A. Reisner, 1910 <i>Excavation:</i> Excavation Registration No.: 3890 Provenance: S4-417 Discovery Date: Aug. 15, 1910</p>
3	72	<p>בשת העשרת יג כרמ. הקל.בבל.שמן.רזש.</p> 	In the tenth year, wine of the Vineyard of the Tell in a jar of washed oil.	<p><i>Image:</i> Digital Object No.: ISF_DO_07473 Photo ID No.: OS_KSAM_72_B_P Photographer: Ivan Kaufman, 1963 <i>Excavation:</i> Excavation Registration No.: 3892 Provenance: Summit slope, S4 or S7 Discovery Date: 1910</p>
4	20	<p>בשת ה'ע[שרת] גכרמ.ה'ת[ל]בבל.ש [רזש.ג'ל]</p> 	In the [tenth] year, wine* of the Vineyard of the [Tell] in a jar of washed / oil.	<p><i>Image:</i> Digital Object No.: ISF_DO_07313 Photo ID No.: OS_KSAM_20_C_P Photographer: Ivan Kaufman, 1963 <i>Excavation:</i> Excavation Registration No.: 3995 Provenance: S4-417 Discovery Date: Aug. 19, 1910</p>

Fig. Samr no.

Image and Excavation information

5 73

בשת. [העשרת. י.כר] (מ.ההל בבבל. שגנ. [רזצ.]

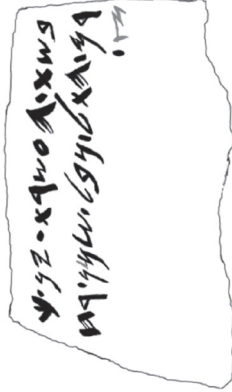
Image:
 Digital Object No.: ISF_DO_07474
 Photo ID No.: OS_KSAM_73_P
 Photographer: Ivan Kaufman, 1963
Excavation:
 Excavation Registration No.: 3893
 Provenance: Summit slope, S4 or S7
 Discovery Date: 1910



6 54

בשת. העשרת. י.כ. ר.מ.הל. «כ» (ב.בבל. שגנ. רה. [צ.] [wa]shed/oil.

Image:
 Digital Object No.: ISF_DO_07439
 Photo ID No.: OS_KSAM_54_B_P
 Photographer: Ivan Kaufman, 1963
Excavation:
 Excavation Registration No.: 4171
 Provenance: S7-723
 Discovery Date: Sept. 1, 1910



7 55

בשת. העשרת. כר. מ. י.חעלי. גבלי. שגנ. רה.צ. washed/oil

Image:
 Digital Object No.: ISF_DO_07441
 Photo ID No.: OS_KSAM_55_B_P
 Photographer: Ivan Kaufman, 1963
Excavation:
 Excavation Registration No.: 4660
 Provenance: S7-772
 Discovery Date: Sept. 26, 1910



Vineyards and wine in the Type III ostraca

The implicit characteristic of the Type III ostraca is the absence of a *lāmēd*-man, and this fact moves the ostraca's interpretation away from questions of sender¹⁴ or recipient.¹⁵ Instead, the emphasis shifts to the shipments (wine, washed oil) and their origin. Of course, the places of origin are the most recognizable feature of the Type III, and the two toponyms constructed around כרם, Vineyard of the Tell and Vineyard of Yəḥāw'ēlī (Renz 1995a: 88), are not found in Types I and II.¹⁶ The question this raises is whether these were villages or small estates (Donner and Röllig 1968: 184; Renz 1995a: 88). Regarding the former possibility, there have been a few attempts to identify Vineyard of the Tell among the Arabic toponyms in the countryside surrounding Sebastia. The most notable suggestion is Till (Abel 1911: 292), a site near Nablus (Shechem).¹⁷ The problem with this identification is that it focuses on a toponymic element (תל) marked by a definite article (Gogel 1998: 383). The grammatical form (התל) indicates that the word 'tell' is a common noun rather than a proper noun, which further suggests that it is a toponymic element that is descriptive of place. The toponymic element תל probably referred to a feature of the vineyard's location (Rainey 1978: 6), either along the slopes or on top of a tell (Gibson 1971:13).¹⁸ Lemaire (1977: 57) even suggested that the vineyard was located on

¹⁴ If the *lāmēd*-man was the sender, and the לְ is a genitive preposition ('for the credit of...' or 'belonging to...'), it fails to explain why the Type III receipts would be necessary. This represents a serious flaw in the genitive interpretation (Donner and Röllig 1968: 184–185). Kaufman (1966: 152–153, 158) confused the matter by stating on the one hand that the *lāmēd*-men would be redundant in the vineyard texts, and on the other, that the lack of *lāmēd*-men makes the recipient theory (לְ meaning 'to...') impossible. One would anticipate the opposite. The omission of *lāmēd*-men on the Type III ostraca is meaningful and necessary, because it was known for whom the wine was intended. Conversely, if the לְ signified tax or tribute, a scribe would have needed to distinguish what belonged to the king in order to separate these shipments from what was being sent to the king by his subjects. One would expect a simple למלך, similar to the inscribed jar handles from Judah (late 8th and early 7th centuries). Cross (1975: 8–10) argued that the numbers were too small for provisions, which overlooks various possibilities (feasting, etc.) and does not help his taxation theory. The fact that the Samaria Ostraca were descriptive texts, written and discarded in the royal acropolis, mitigates this concern (Rainey 1979: 72–73; 1988: 92).

¹⁵ If the *lāmēd*-man is understood to be the recipient (the dative use of לְ; 'to...'), and his relation to the respective source of supply is taken to be one of kinship affiliation, or royal grant, the deliberate omission of a recorded recipient removes the Type III ostraca from this explanatory model. Niemann (2008: 250) implies that the Type III (his Type 11) are representative of royal domain on a more limited scale.

¹⁶ Again, with the odd exceptions of *Samr* 58 and 61.

¹⁷ In the *editio princeps* (Reisner, Fisher and Lyon 1924: 228) one finds the statement that כרם התל 'is certainly the name of a place, perhaps the present et-Tell in the valley west of Samaria'. More problematical, Dussaud (1926: 13) took כרם התל and התל (in *Samr* 56 and 99) to be two separate locations, and identified the first with the Arabic toponym Ṭulkarm (suggesting that it was a portmanteau, inverting the words for vineyard and tell). There have been no attempts to locate Vineyard of Yəḥāw'ēlī outside of Diringier's mentioning and dismissal of a site west of Shechem, recorded as *Aiolim* in a 16th century map (1934: 54).

¹⁸ The term may have been a fairly common appellative (Noth 1932: 63; cf. Diringier 1934: 54), although the scarcity of other toponyms using תל does not support this. But it is important to keep in mind that the word was used in classical Hebrew (see, e.g., Josh 8:24 and 11:13).

the slopes of Samaria, and that the tell ‘designe la colline par excellence’. It seems more likely that the vineyards were located outside of Samaria, thus warranting their inclusion among the other shipments, but Lemaire’s suggestion remains an intriguing possibility.

Efforts to identify Vineyard of the Tell with an ancient village overlook two further points regarding the toponymic element תל (‘mound’). Although this term is common in ancient and modern Middle Eastern place names (Suriano 2012: 213–215),¹⁹ it was rarely used in the southern Levant during the first millennium BCE.²⁰ Furthermore, this toponymic element usually occupies the first position of the construct chain, such as in Til Barsip.²¹ Instead, the grammatical construction of both place names (Vineyard of the Tell and Vineyard of Yəḥāw‘ēlī) is formed with כרם in the first position,²² indicating a genitival relationship, specifically one of ownership (e.g., the ‘vineyard of Yahweh of Hosts’ in Isa 5:7).²³ A cogent parallel is ‘Naboth’s Vineyard’ (כרם נבוֹת) in 1 Kg 21:18, which refers to an area within Jezreel, suggesting that Yəḥāw‘ēlī may similarly reflect the vineyard’s original ownership (Diringer 1934: 54).²⁴ Thus, it is reasonable to assume

¹⁹ Place names constructed around Akkadian *tillu* (and Sumerian **DU**₆) were located in the northern Levant and Mesopotamia (see Parpola 1970; Groneberg 1980).

²⁰ In the Hebrew Bible, all of the place names using תל refer to locations in the northern Levant or Mesopotamia, for instance: תל הַקָּשָׁא and תל מַלְחָה. Both of these places are unidentified, but refer to locations in southern Mesopotamia from whence the exiles returned in Ezra 2:59 and Neh 7:61 (cf. also Tel-Abib in Ezek 3:15). Similarly, Tel-Assar (תֵּל־אֲשָׁר) in 2 Kg 19:12 was probably somewhere in the northern Levant, near Bit-Adini. Cf. תל של כהלת (‘tell of Kohlit’), which occurs in the Copper Scroll from Qumran (3Q15).

²¹ The toponymic construct כרם התל is similar to the Sumerian term **A.ŠA₃.DU**₆ (literally ‘field of the Tell’), which represented agricultural units in cuneiform sources (Black 2002). For references, see the lexical lists cited by Edzard and Farber (1974: 31).

²² See, for example, אֶבֶן כְּרָמִים (Judg 11:33) and בֵּית הַכְּרָם (Jer 6:1; Neh 3:). The latter site could also be referred to as simply ‘the Vineyard’ (see Καρῆμ in Josh 15:59a LXX).

²³ Note also the examples of the construct where the *nomen rectum* is a common noun in Deut 23:25 and Prov 24:30.

²⁴ The name could have represented the royal official in charge of the vineyard, although it is more likely that it was the name of the original owner (Noth 1927: 226–227, n. 3; Lemaire 1977: 57). The name itself (Yəḥāw‘ēlī) is the only occurrence of a proper noun in the Type III ostraca, and it only appears elsewhere in a fragmented source (*Samr* 60). In fact Yəḥāw‘ēlī is unprecedented outside the Samaria Ostraca, although similar names are found in Northwest Semitic. In Phoenician, among other examples, see Yəḥāw‘milk in *KAI* 10 (Gibson 1982: 96, n. 1) and in Hebrew see יְהוֹאֵל (Ezra 8:9 and Chron; see Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow and Whitaker 2004: 602). Yəḥāw‘ēlī is a compound name based on the *pi’el* of $\sqrt{\text{ח}}$, with the second word possibly representing an abbreviated name of a deity (i.e., עלי > עֲלִיּוֹן [Genesis 14; see Renz 1995b: 71; Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow and Whitaker 2004: 602]). Gibson (1971: 13) interpreted the verb form as a jussive-*pi’el* of the ‘archaic’ root (חוי > חוי). Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow and Whitaker (2004: 474, 478) vocalize the name Yuhaw‘ali based on their understanding of the early history of the *pi’el* prefix. Given the conjectural nature of vocalizations (Renz 1995b: 71), however, this article follows the more conventional form of the name (Ahituv 2008: 307).

that these vineyards were local estates that were nestled among the villages surrounding the royal capital.²⁵

The wine shipments in the Type III ostraca are listed simply as ינ.כרמ.התל (“wine of Vineyard of the Tell”). In other words, the product is written in construct with its source, indicating that the wine’s value came from its vintage. Unlike the Type I texts, the prepositional –מ (“from”) is not used,²⁶ which may indicate multiple attributes of the vineyards and their wine. The preposition may have been omitted because it was more important to stress the wine’s provenance, or it may have been unnecessary because of the general nature of the vineyards as small estates (rather than shipments from villages). Indeed the omission of both the –מ and the –ל prepositions is quite telling (Renz 1995a: 81). The interchange of prepositions in Types I and II (marking ‘to ... from ...’) plays an important role in establishing the cultural meaning behind these administrative records (Rainey 1988: 72–73). Whatever this meaning was, and this once was a hotly debated topic, it does not directly apply to the Type III ostraca. As has been noted, it was unnecessary to write the name of the shipment’s recipient (i.e., the king) because the shipments were received in Samaria’s royal compound. It stands to reason that it was also unnecessary to mark the product from a particular place. The sources of these shipments were simply local vineyards owned by the king; their significance in the Type III ostraca was in marking the wine’s provenance.

With the exception of *Samr* 55, from Vineyard of Yəḥāw‘ēlī (Fig. 7 in Table 1), wine in the Type III ostraca was linked ambiguously with a jar of washed oil by means of a –מ preposition. This specific syntax is found in *Samr* 53 and 72, and should be restored in *Samr* 54, which follows the same structure (wine followed by a jar of washed oil; Fig. 6 in Table 1). The formula can also be reconstructed in *Samr* 20 and 73 (Figs. 4 and 5 in Table 1). The translation of this preposition, however, remains an unresolved problem. Solutions include –מ as an indication of exchange (Reisner, Fisher and Lyon 1924) or equivalency (Kaufman 1966; Schloen 2001: 158, Table 4). The difficulty with these interpretations is that *Samr* 55 (Fig. 7 in Table 1) lists only ‘a jar of washed oil’, which indicates that the product here and elsewhere represented actual shipments rather than an abstract value. Furthermore, the theory of equivalency is undermined by a recent study suggesting that the term נָבֵל

²⁵ The unusual occurrence of this toponymic element may highlight the agricultural qualities of this specific location. Cuneiform sources, and modern ethnographic observations (Lloyd 1963: 15–16), have shown that tells could serve as rich sources of arable land. Note the following quotes from Old Babylonian letters: ‘may they deliver soil from the tell’ (*ina tillim eperī lizabbilu*), and ‘may they take soil from the tells, which have good soil’ (*ina tillani ša eperu šunu damqu... eperī lilqū*). For full citation, refer CAD T: 410 (s.v. *tillu* A); the translations are by the author.

²⁶ Wine shipments in Type III are not listed as ‘a jar of wine from Vineyard of the Tell’. Aside from the possible (but improbable) reading in *Samr* 20: 2, this formation is only seen in *Samr* 26 (Type II), ‘the wine from Ha[zeroth]’. See also the speculation regarding the traces of writing on the fragment of *Samr* 58 in Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow and Whitaker (2004: 381). Although conjectural, two possible reconstructions are offered. One is to reconstruct the –מ preposition to go along with the *lāmēd*-man: ‘To Bedeiah, from Vineyard of the Tell’. This reading would be consistent with the other Year 15 ostraca (Type II). The other possibility is to read ינ, which would be consistent with Type III (although this ostrakon is anomalous). Outside of the Type III ostraca, only *Samr* 62 (which is a jar label) marks wine according to its provenance: ‘wine of Shemida’ (ינ שמיד ע’).

never had a fixed value of measurement (Nam 2012: 155–163). Another interpretation is ‘with a jar...’ (Renz 1995a: 103, n. 3), but this raises the question of the preposition’s necessity. Why not write נבל twice? The Type I ostraca simply lists both products, each in its respective jar, without the preposition.

The optimal translation is: ‘in/inside a jar...’ (Lemaire 1977: 36; cf. Diring 1934: 35), which reflects a functional interpretation where wine was either combined with olive oil, or shipped in vessels that had been used for oil.²⁷ The use of additives in wine is a known practice in antiquity, particularly in the production of resinated wine in ancient Egypt (McGovern 1996: 80–83). Hittite sources also refer to oil added to wine (Gorny 1995: 153–155). Oil could have been added to wine both to enhance taste and as a preservative (Walsh and Zorn 1998: 156). Although the inscriptional evidence here is limited, certain observations can be made regarding the –ב affixed to נבל. The use of the preposition was intentional, and it was only used for shipments from royal vineyards. These two points raise the possibility that the shipments intended for the king were specialized products, enriched by the combination of wine and oil.

Conclusion

The edition of the Type III records fills a gap in the study of the Samaria Ostraca, and it confirms the formulaic features found in *Samr* 53–54, 72 and reconstructed in *Samr* 20 and 73. Because these particular ostraca were published in a piecemeal manner, and incompletely (without drawings), researchers only interacted with them cursorily. The incorrect placement of these ostraca in Kaufman’s Type I added to the obfuscation of their unique features. The collection of these features within a separate category (Type III), in a complete publication of the vineyard ostraca from the tenth year, highlights their distinctiveness in comparison with the other writings from Samaria. The survey of the Type III ostraca strongly supports their interpretation as records of wine shipments from royal vineyards to the Israelite king. As such, the Type III ostraca stand out as primary sources for the study of royal practice. These ostraca differ from those of the larger corpus and their characteristics bear witness to the production of difference, that is, socio-political practices that create royal privilege. This is the most effective explanation for the omission of the prepositions –מ (‘from...’) and –ל (‘to...’), and hence the absence of any *lāmēd*-men. Within the administrative records of the Samaria Ostraca, the vineyards listed were the king’s exclusive domain. In fact, as royal estates, the vineyards appear to be situated among the network of villages surrounding Samaria (if not on its slopes). Finally, the wine shipped from these vineyards suggests that they were the privileged products of the king, marked by their vintage. These observations, made possible by isolating the Type III ostraca from the rest of the corpus, provide new insight into kingship and the formation of power relations in the Israelite capital during the Iron II.

²⁷ The possibilities here include a special type of oil jar that was repurposed for wine, or the reuse of vessels where residual oil might have affected the wine. These questions, of course, are made more difficult by the uncertainty of the term נבל, which may have been a bota-like skin or a ceramic vessel (M. Aharoni 1979: 95–97; cf. Nam 2012). Another possibility is that the vineyards were in such close proximity to Samaria that they were shipped in containers normally used for oil, perhaps due to a difference in volume.

Acknowledgments

This article is dedicated to two scholars not only for their many contributions to the study of epigraphic Hebrew, but also for their personal encouragement of my research: Anson F. Rainey (אָנזאָן פֿ. ראַינע) and Bruce Zuckerman. In addition, would like to acknowledge my gratitude for the comments I received from Marilyn Lundberg, William Schniedewind, Jeremy Smoak, Heather Parker, Itzhaq Shai, Omer Sergi, and the journal's editor Israel Finkelstein. I am solely responsible for any errors contained within the article, however.

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