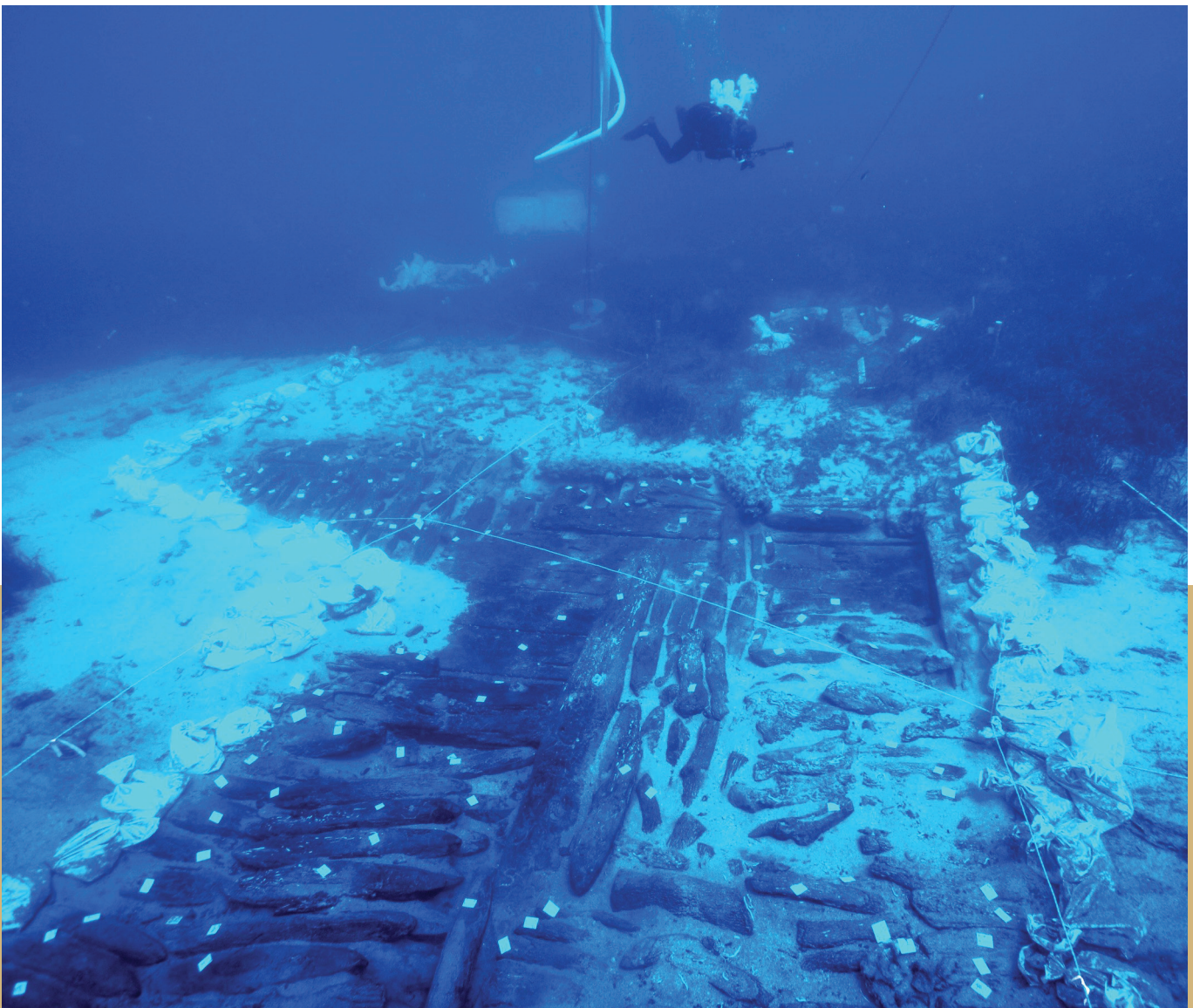
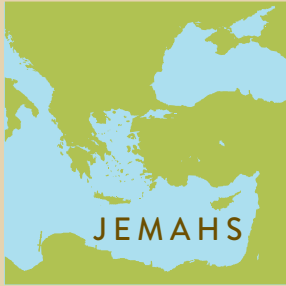


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That mini-rant leads to a final set of observations. For all its positioning as a volume on the uses of social theory in Middle Eastern archaeology and history, this volume does not consider what an effective use of theory would look like. Those of us trained in anthropological archaeology have learned that there are some basic parameters. Whatever the source of the theory, it should propose a new understanding of connections among phenomena. Theory is not useful on its own—it has to be effectively applied to data, and the proof of its utility is the extent to which it explains processes in the past, and ultimately, the archaeological record itself. By that measure, the chapters in this volume, and the volume as a whole, are in fact at the trailing edge of archaeological practice in the Middle East today.

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### *The Archaeology of the Ostraca House at Israelite Samaria: Epigraphic Discoveries in Complicated Contexts.* By Ron E. Tappy.

Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 70. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2016. Pp. vii + 220. Hardback, \$89.95. ISBN 978-0-89757-095-4.

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In this publication, Tappy deals with the history and local stratigraphy surrounding the 1910 discovery by the Harvard Expedition to Samaria of 63 ostraca, found in 75 fragments. He declares that “the precise archaeological context of the ostraca remains among the most vexing questions for modern interpreters” (35), giving the

impression that this publication will provide an answer. It does not. It is, however, a beautifully presented publication comprising an introduction, six chapters with more than 66 figures, eight tables, five appendices (A–E) and six plates. Unfortunately, there are some errors and the reader must be cautious when using certain sections of this publication.

In the introduction the author declares: “I have . . . come to know and appreciate the various individuals who played pivotal roles in the early exploration of Samaria.” He mentions in particular the “inveterate determination of George Andrew Reisner” and “the steady and artful hand of Clarence Stanley Fisher.” Tappy then informs the reader that he will be discussing their methodological shortcomings even though he acknowledges that these must not be examined using today’s criteria (xv).

Chapter 1 opens with an early history of the site, which is, in reality, an uncritical account of the biblical narrative presented as history (4–6). The main part of this chapter, however, introduces the site and the personalities involved in its excavation, including an excellent description of the mechanics of excavating using the strip system and why it was necessary, and a detailed sequence of excavation and subsequent back-filling. This is an invaluable source for understanding Samaria and should be a prerequisite for any study of an old excavation.

Chapters 2 and 3 present the archaeological evidence, the stratigraphy of the buildings, and the provenance of the ostraca. The discussion includes the size and layout of the so-called Ostraca House and its relationship to the so-called Osorkon House. Regrettably, it is in these two chapters, which deal with the very subject of the publication’s title, that mistakes arise that severely detract from the value of this publication. The two principal errors will be dealt with below.

Chapter 2 opens with a discussion regarding Wall A, also referred to as Ahab’s “Main Wall” (37–38), and its relationship to the Ostraca House. It is here that the first problem arises. In response to Reisner’s claim that a floor extended from the western face of Wall A to long-Room 417 (27 ostraca were associated with Room 417), the author embarks on a lengthy discussion illustrated by figures 25 and 26. The former, however (republished from *HES I*: 58, fig. 13), does not show Wall A or the area west of it. All the elements shown in

figure 25 are ca. 13 meters east of Wall A in Grid Square G.12 (Strip 2); therefore, they are not relevant to the discussion, and their presentation inadvertently creates more problems. Figure 38 (82) (republished from *HES II: Plan 4*) clearly shows Wall A in Grid Square F.12 and the relationship with the extraneous elements in Grid Square G.12. The confusion nullifies much of the discussion that follows.

The second problem concerns the foundations of the Ostraca House. Reisner's field sketches, reproduced as figures 27 and 28, show an interesting stepped-construction technique used on the foundations of the "Greek Fort Wall." Reisner noted that this technique was used also on the foundations of the Ostraca House, but Tappy dismisses this claim, asserting that it does not appear on Fisher's architectural plans (47). The discussion regarding these foundation walls paves the way for the author to debate the possibility of preexisting walls of an unknown building having been used by the builders of the Ostraca House. The discussion continues in Chapter 3, where the author notes that the walls dividing Room 408 from Rooms 407 and 415 have exceptionally wide foundations that most likely represent the existence of an earlier building (87). However, on figure 26 the bottom courses of these wide foundations are clearly represented by plain (unhatched) additions to Rooms 406, 407, 408, 410, 411, 413, 414, 415, and 417, and on figure 41 one of the foundation walls, colored grey and marked "b," is shown in its entirety below the superstructure of Room 415. The author did not realize that this was Fisher's way of showing that the foundations were wider than the superstructure. Tappy was presumably led astray by Harvard's original plan of the Ostraca House, which contains a serious mistake in the legend. The label "Later Addition" should have read "Earlier Construction." This mistake was first noted by this reviewer over a decade ago (Franklin 2004: 196). Although Tappy does comment that these "later additions" gave the impression of being at a lower elevation (50), his lack of acknowledgment of Harvard's error gives rise to a lot of groundless discussion and to the disparagement of Reisner's correct observation.

The author does raise the important question: "Did more than one building occupy this space during the Iron Age IIB period?" (37). Located north of the Ostraca

House is another so-called later addition. Tappy describes this feature as the "Two-Room Structure" (50), noting that it is well built and located below Rooms 740 and 741 of the so-called Osorkon Building (53). Following much deliberation, he eventually agrees that this is, in his words, a "mysterious monumental structure" and could date to "anytime between the rule of Omri and the construction of the Ostraca House" (71). He continues to confirm the presence of such a building (75, 87) and acknowledges that others before him—Kaufman in his 1966 doctoral dissertation and Franklin (2004:196)—have recognized the existence of such a structure. Consequently, Tappy correctly proposes that the "Two-Room Structure" is the remains of the noted "mysterious monumental structure" (71). He makes no mention that this structure is actually Franklin's "lost Monumental Building already attributed to the earliest building period" (2004: 196). The presence of a building that antedates the Ostraca House is of extreme importance when the whole *raison d'être* of this publication is to pinpoint "the precise archaeological context of the ostraca" (35). Unfortunately, most of the discussion is directed at looking for a non-existing building whose wide foundations were presumed by the author to have been used by the Ostraca House, despite the fact that the excavators did not provide any evidence for such a building.

Although the above-mentioned shortcomings seriously detract from the overall value of the publication, they do not alter the author's confirmation that the Israelite ostraca cannot be associated with the Ostraca House (49). Instead, as the author correctly notes, the ostraca were found within the deep, "dirty yellow" material that made up the constructional fill underlying the Ostraca House and other features west of Wall A (42), and cannot be associated with the Ostraca House, having originated in an earlier stratum.

Mention must be made of two other errors that arise in the text; although they do not have a direct bearing on the ostraca, they do relate to some of the author's misinterpretations. The first concerns the work of the architect Clarence Fisher. Though Tappy praises his "steady and artful hand" (xv), he found his north-south section drawings problematic, particularly as the section plane sometimes deviated five or more meters to the east or

west without any indication marked on the horizontal top plan (61). Although this is understandably annoying and very different from today's archaeological conventions, one must remember that it is a convention used in architectural plans, as opposed to archaeological section drawings. That is, in architectural drawings it is accepted that the line of a cutting plane is offset so that the section provides data on the largest number of architectural features. While this should be immediately noticeable to anyone working with Fisher's plans, apparently Ussishkin was the first to mention this fact (95). On a positive note, Fisher's technique provided an optimal representation of architectural data in the section. It is also important to point out that on Harvard's north-south sections the vertical plane only ever shifted east or west, never north or south. Furthermore, several architectural features were omitted from *HES II*: Plan 5, thus, the caution against a duplication of "Rock-Tomb 7" (83) is unwarranted (especially as both tomb entrances can still be observed on site).

The second inaccuracy is more serious; figures 21B and 44 (adapted from *SS I*) and figure 22 (adapted from *HES II*: Plan 5) have acquired a thick, blue line that purports to show the location of the Israelite rock scarp. This blue line is placed incorrectly and does not show the scarp. In figure 21B the high north-south scarp is shown as if it extended northwards and joined the lower, 1 to 2 meter east-west scarp. In reality, these two scarps are quite separate entities that do not meet. In addition, the north-south scarp is shown as a straight line. It is not. The earliest palace was built when the high north-south scarp was cut and they share the same outline. Moreover, the blue line is placed between 1 to 8 meters too far west, while the northern and southern sections of the palace scarp are not shown at all. The author wrote his introduction to this publication in Jerusalem, just 82 km via Highway 60 from ancient Samaria but, apparently, he had not visited the site for many years. This is unfortunate, because a visit, armed with Fisher's plans, would have prevented this error, as large sections of the scarp are still visible today despite partial backfilling and a century of soil erosion.

Chapter 4 examines the ceramic ware that bore the inscriptions in order to establish when these were written. The study is interrupted (107–10) with interesting

anecdotal excerpts from Reisner's and Schumacher's published and unpublished diaries, showing the bureaucratic troubles that beset the expedition.

Chapter 5 deals with the Samaria ostraca in modern scholarship. It includes only research published during the sixty years following Harvard's publication. Admittedly, there is only a handful of studies that have dealt with the ostraca in the last 30 years; all date the ostraca to the 8th century BCE.

Chapter 6 returns to the delightful task of examining the background of, not just Reisner and Fisher, but also those whose zeal and patronage made the Harvard Expedition to Samaria possible.

The five appendices reproduce material from the Harvard publications dealing with the ostraca. Appendices A and B present in tabular format the provenance of each ostrakon and its ware type, the sequence of discovery, and useful comments. These tables should prove useful in any future study. Associated non-epigraphic pottery is dealt with in Appendix C. Appendix D is the reproduction of Harvard's Annual Report from 1900. It is irrelevant to a discussion of the ostraca but it is a nice tribute to the benefactor, Schiff, who made their discovery possible. Appendix E consists of 23 pages taken from Reisner's Field Diaries V–VI reproduced in color. As the field diaries are available online and the link provided, it seems a strange decision to reproduce them here.

Lastly, the author continues to use the outdated terminology for the three successive structural phases on the acropolis, devised by the Harvard Expedition, referring to them as the Omri, Ahab, and Jeroboam II Periods, respectively. This terminology was abandoned in the 1930s by the second expedition to Samaria, the Joint Expedition, who relabeled these phases with the neutral Building Periods I, II, and III. The new terminology has been used since then by Tappy and other scholars and should have been employed here as well.

The main title "The Archaeology of the Ostraca House at Israelite Samaria" and the sub-title "Epigraphic Discoveries in Complicated Contexts" would have been better reversed. The complicated archaeological context of the ostraca is the central question while the so-called Ostraca House is conclusively shown to have no connection with them.



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## Response to Norma Franklin's Review

RON E. TAPPY, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 616 North Highland Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15206; tappy@fyi.net

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to Franklin's review of my recent book, though I am disappointed that she did not see more value in it. We disagree on a number of decisions about the volume's contents, several interpretive questions, and readings of previous researchers' work. I will explain the logic behind my decisions below. Franklin has already offered her thoughts in the review above.

Franklin begins by criticizing my inclusion of a brief account of the biblical story; a tribute to Jakob Schiff, without whom there would have been no Harvard Project (Appendix D); unpublished field sketches of the ostraca from Reisner's diaries (Appendix E); and excerpts from the field records concerning the discovery of the ostraca (107–10). Unlike Franklin, I believe that this material greatly enriches the volume and enhances its usefulness.

Franklin then reveals what she takes as "two principal errors" that "severely detract" from my study. The first matter involves Ahab's "Main Wall" ("Wall A"). She correctly notes that the architecture in my figure 25 lies east of Wall A, not west of it (although the pavement "p" actually begins ca. 7–7.5 m east of the wall, not 13 m as she claims). The context in question relates to Room 13 on *HES II*: Plan 5 (see my figures 22, 25; also *HES II*: Plan 8c). Reisner's narrative (*HES I*: 58) places these features just east of the complex labeled 776. So Room 13 lay in the northern portion of Reisner's Grid G.12, while 776 lay immediately west in Grid F.11 (and encroached on F.12).

Though my figure 25 lay slightly east of Wall A, it shows a wall-floor relationship apropos to my larger discussion. In my narrative, I make clear that figure 25 neither connects to nor directly represents Wall A. Emending those

allusions as follows would tighten my three references to this graphic: (1) page 26b: "(in Ch. 2, fig. 25, compare another, nearby wall—east of Wall A—that Reisner also attributed to Ahab)"; (2) page 38: "Only a single drawing . . . mudbricks (cf. the area east of Wall A, in fig. 25, for a wall-floor relationship similar to the published description of the western face of Wall A itself)"; and (3) page 96b: "Fig. 25" should be corrected to "Fig. 26." In any event, Figs. 25–26 reflect similar circumstances concerning walls and floors attributed to Ahab, and the fact that my figure 25 lay in Grid G.12 while figure 26 shows F.12 does not "nullify" the relative value of the two drawings in the larger context of my discussion.

Franklin identifies my supposed second "error" as involving the foundations of the Ostraca House (OH) and the question of whether an earlier structure existed in the area. Although she says that I understand the widest walls resting on the bedrock beneath the OH as possible evidence of an earlier building phase, she complains that "on [my] figure 26 the bottom courses of these wide foundations are clearly represented by plain (unhatched) additions to Rooms 406, 407, . . ." (emphasis added). Then she writes that I "did not realize that this was Fisher's way of showing that the foundations were wider than the superstructure." In his field diaries, Reisner actually sketched the stepped foundations discovered beneath the massive GFW (see my figures 27–28). Even a novice archaeologist who compares these graphics with Fisher's rendering of the wide walls beneath the OH will see that the two architectural styles hardly match. Rather, the red and green walls on my figure 41 represent two completely different phases, not multiple risers or a series of pyramid-like steps on foundation pilings. Moreover, Reisner's purported level for Ahab's courtyard floor sometimes runs above both phases, sometimes through the red phase, and sometimes even through the lower, green phase.

In the following paragraph, Franklin opts (as I do) for interpreting the unhatched walls as foundations for the OH, but only because she somehow *knows* that Harvard/Reisner/Fisher committed a "serious mistake" (which, in turn, "led [Tappy] astray") by mislabeling the unhatched architectural phase in figure 26 as "Later Additions" when they really meant to write "Earlier Construction." Franklin nowhere explains how she knows this claim to