

PERSONAL NAME OR ROYAL EPITHET?
A Remark on Ostrakon 1027 from Tell el-Far'ah (South)

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The archaeological excavations at Tell Far'ah (South) have been reassumed recently under the direction of Gunnar Lehmann and Tammi J. Schneider.¹ The site is located about midway between Gaza and Beer-Sheba and is not far away from an ancient road that connected Egypt with Syria and Mesopotamia. A fruit from the first season of re-excavation in 1999 is an inscribed reddish yellow sherd. The archaeological context as well as the paleography of the inscription suggests an Iron I origin.² The inscription reads as follows:

לֹאדָנָנ

Despite its shortness, the inscription is not easy to interpret. The script can be classified as Philisto-Canaanite by which is said that the inscription belongs to a rather small group of texts written in an alphabetical script from the southern Levant.³ This also implies that a decision as to the language of the inscription cannot be made. Instead of ascribing the inscription to Hebrew, Judahite or Semitic-Philistine, it would be safe to label the inscription as Southern Canaanite.⁴ As regards the literary form of the inscription, Knauf and Niemann assume the inscription to be a 'note of delivery'.⁵ This suggestion tallies with the content of the inscription and with the material of the sherd. The construction *l+Receiver's name or function* is well known from various Paleo-Hebrew inscriptions. This construction is attested in the inscriptions on various jar handles from Iron Age Levant. The so-called *lmk*-seals form another set of examples from this category. The reddish-yellow clay of the vessel of which the sherd apparently has been a part, has been used frequently for transport jars in Iron Age Levant.⁶ The character of the delivery, unfortunately, cannot be detected.

The interpretation of the morpheme *'dnn* is open to three possibilities:

1. *'dnn* may refer to a deity indicated by an epithet: 'our Lord',
2. *'dnn* may refer to a king or a superior officer: 'our lord',
3. *'dnn* may be (part of) a personal name: 'Adnan; Adon-n[...]'

The first possibility is very unlikely. Knauf and Niemann suggest that the shortness of the inscription and the 'Formlose Art der Präsentation' do not favour the view that the inscription should be construed as (part of) a dedication for a deity.⁷ Already in Ugarit *'adn* is a metaphor

¹ See Lehmann and Schneider (1999) and the website: <http://farahsouth.cgu.edu/index.htm>. For a survey of earlier excavations at Tell Far'ah (South) see Keel und Küchler (1982), 128-132; Gophna (1993); Lehmann and Schneider (1999), 252.

² See Knauf und Niemann (1999); Lehmann and Schneider (1999).

³ See Knauf und Niemann (1999), 247. The dedicatory inscription from Ekron is another example of this category; see Gitin, Dothan and Naveh (1997), esp. 13-15.

⁴ As has been done by Knauf und Niemann (1999), 248.

⁵ Knauf und Niemann (1999), 248: 'Lieferbegleitzettel'. See also Renz (1995), 17-18; 'Lieferscheine'.

⁶ Lehmann and Schneider (1999), 253.

⁷ Knauf und Niemann (1999), 248-249.

for the divine.⁸ The noun also occurs as an epithet for the divine in various West Semitic inscriptions – albeit outnumbered by attestations of *'dn* referring to human ‘lords’.⁹ It should, nevertheless, be noted that dedications for a deity as a rule contain the name of the deity and not an epithet or a metaphorical indication.

Knauf and Niemann advocate the second option.¹⁰ They suggest that the inscription was accompanying a delivery to the local magistrate in Tell el-Far‘ah. Their interpretation, however, fails to do justice to the suffix in *'dnn*. The king or magistrate in Westsemitic ‘notes of delivery’ are, to the best of our knowledge, never referred to by a suffix.¹¹ In the well known *lmlk*-stamps the ‘king’ in question is never specified as ‘our king’ or ‘my king’. Moreover, *'dn*, ‘lord’, is nowhere attested as the title of a royal magistrate.¹² The title serves like its opposite *'bd*, ‘servant’, as a term to express a relationship between persons of different social strata or functions.¹³ The use of *'dnn* thus seems to presuppose a further title like *sr* as in the ostrakon from Mesad Hesjavjahu¹⁴, or the Petition of the Widow-inscription¹⁵, or a personal name as in the Arad and Lachish ostraca.¹⁶ A look at the photograph of the inscribed sherd makes clear that a part of the ostrakon may have been broken off.¹⁷ This observation would imply that the inscription originally may well have read *l'dnn [hsr]*, ‘for our lord, the governor’, or *l'dnn [PN]*, ‘for our lord PN’.

As for the third option, Knauf and Niemann state that it is difficult to construe *'dnn* as a personal name. They refer to the fact that the earliest attestation of the name *'dnn* is in a Safaitic inscription.¹⁸ Their interpretation, however, is based upon the premise that *'dnn* is the full name of the person in question. As part of the inscription seems to be missing, the assumption that the name is incomplete is equally possible. From the Westsemitic onomasticon two parallels for *'dnn[...]* can be listed:

- Ugaritic: *'adnn'm*¹⁹
- Ammonite: אדנינר ‘Adoni-nur’.²⁰

These parallels show that an interpretation of *'dnn[...]* as a personal name as such is plausible.²¹

⁸ See Korpel (1990), 273-280; Rösel (2000), 21-23.

⁹ Renz (1995), 212; Hoftijzer and Jongeling (1995), 15-17; Rösel (2000), 17-55.

¹⁰ Knauf und Niemann (1999).

¹¹ The analogous *l'dnyl[...]* on the base of an eighth-seventh century oil lamp from Kadesh Barnea should in all probability be read as the personal name *'dny[hw]*, ‘Adonijah’; see Cohen (1982), 71; Davies (1991), 84.

¹² The title is conspicuously lacking in the lists presented by Rütterswörden (1985).

¹³ See Rütterswörden (1985), 92-95.

¹⁴ MHas(7):1.1 שר אדני ישמע, ‘May may lord, the governor, hear’; see also Rösel (2000), 26.

¹⁵ Bordreuil, Israel and Pardee (1996) 2:1-2 [שר] ועת ישמע אדני ה[שר], ‘Behold, may my lord, the [governor] hear’.

¹⁶ E.g. אל אדני יאוש in Lak(6):1.2, 1; Lak(6):1.6, 1; or אל אדני אלישב in Arad(6):18, 1-2.

¹⁷ Pace Knauf and Niemann (1999), 248, who insist that the shape of the final nun indicates that the inscription is complete.

¹⁸ Knauf und Niemann (1999), 248.

¹⁹ KTU 4.171:5; cf. Gröndahl (1967), 90.163.261.

²⁰ See Hübner (1992), 53.

In sum: The suggestion that *l'dnn* presents the first part of an address 'for our lord, [the governor]', 'for our lord [PN]', or the like, and the view that *'dnn* is part of a Canaanite personal name are equally possible. The dilemma may only be solved when other parts of the jar in question were to be found.

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²¹ No examples from Hebrew could be found. The damaged name אדננ [א בן יסד] which features in a seventh century Phoenician inscription found in Ur (*KAI* 29, 2), may either be interpreted as 'our lord [PN], the son of Jasad', or as the personal name 'Adoni-n[]a, the son of Jasad'.