STUDIES IN SAMARITAN SCRIBAL PRACTICES AND MANUSCRIPT HISTORY

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For some years now it has been apparent that long-standing assumptions about Samaritan palaeography, codicology and codicography do not stand the test of detailed analysis across a wide sampling of dated manuscripts. Unfortunately, though there are hundreds of Samaritan manuscripts in the libraries of the world, probably more than a thousand all told, and an equivalent number of fragments, not enough of these carry dates or have been dated by critical examination. The basic rule in palaeography and codicology is that the researcher works on an inductive basis from as wide a sample as possible of dated manuscripts, hence, it is essential to date as many of the undated manuscripts as possible. That task is not really as daunting as it might sound.

Firstly, basic lines of approach to the problems of Samaritan palaeography have already been suggested by the author. It is hoped that in the studies, "Samaritan Majuscule Palaeography. Eleventh to Twentieth Century" (*Bulletin*, vol. lx and lxi), "Problems in Epigraphy and Palaeography: The Nature of the Evidence in Samaritan Sources" (*Bulletin*, vol. lxii) and "Samaritan Minuscule Palaeography" (*Bulletin*, vol. lxiii) evidence has been provided which will make it possible to identify a selected group of individual scribes. At very least, these studies should make it possible to allocate scripts to scribal centres and to eras of writing, perhaps within fairly fine tolerances of error. Even with undated fragments, then, one could come to precise conclusions about the date, both from palaeographic comparisons and in other ways. Palaeographic comparisons will become easier in the near future as computer programming of scripts as 'software packages' will make it possible for any researcher to test undated scripts against an established data base.[1] Even now the task of

[1] The late Stephan Strelczyn was one of the pioneers in the application of the computer to identifying letter shapes (in Coptic) for palaeographical purposes. The author is designing a programme for identifying Samaritan scripts in conjunction with the University of Sydney Computing Centre and a colleague, Dr. W.J. Jobling, who works in the field of Thammudic and Nabatean. It is

comparison can be faced with some equanimity in the knowledge that the family of *Nesiim* probably of Yabneh[2] and the *Nunah* family of Serifin, the *Metuḥiah* family of Egypt, and the Levitical family from 1500 onwards, turned out between them more than 200 manuscripts and we have dated samples of the work of the more prolific scribes. Using these scripts alone as an inventory makes it possible to identify many fragments and unsigned, whole manuscripts. We are then able to draw on these samples for the details of codicological practice. Secondly, many of the undated fragments have references in their scholia to Samaritan owners, vendors, witnesses to deeds of sale or even part of the name of a scribe.

To identify part names with some degree of certainty and to match samples of writing with a known scribe demands a comprehensive but comparatively simple record-keeping system, with adequate cross-indexing and, where possible, computer recovery of letter shapes, ductus and data. Unfortunately, identification of the hand movements of a scribe, and the recording thereof, is a long process. Each alphabet takes several weeks' work with modern aids, from microscope to microfilm printers, and this, most efficient, way of identifying a scribe's writing, is the one least available to us because of its demands on time and facilities.

From the time that paper first came into common use for manuscripts, the nature of the paper has varied, and, in recent years, studies have begun to describe that variation with regard to the more visible characteristics of the paper, namely, wire marks and patina. The study of watermarks, after some eclipse, because of the problems of recording, has again returned to favour. The author has found that under the electron-microscope one can now find some structural differences in paper according to the centre of manufacture. When all these details are recorded with properties specific to Samaritan scribes, one has a useful source for inductive evaluation of Samaritan manuscripts.

The writer has been gathering all this data in an index, called the *Index of Samaritan Scribes*, for a period of some years. Clearly, the task is a substantial one, since the information to be recorded

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hoped that one product of the programme will be a data base that can be used in any library with computer facility, for palaeographic comparison in Samaritan.

[2] For this and the following names see the forthcoming study of the writing rates of scribes, no. 2 in this series.

is varied and plentiful and the manuscripts are scattered worldwide. Only the generosity of the Australian Research Grants Commission and the University of Sydney, has made it possible to progress even at its present unfinished state of listing some six hundred and fifty manuscripts and their properties.

The core of the project is an index card which presents basic data about each scribe and each manuscript. The printed card provides a standard format for information gathering, allows for the storage of a script sample of each scribe's fist, and also for basic descriptions of manuscripts and scholia. A cross-index gives a data number to each manuscript known and recorded, and the vital statistic of the manuscript.

In a series of cross-references, there is a catalogue of library holdings, showing the distribution of manuscripts, the date and the content. From these alone one can scan and see the shape—liturgy, Pentateuch, chronicle, halachah—of the literary production of Samaritan scribes at any given era. Each scribal family has its own entry, with the name of each member of the family and his manuscripts and date. A major cross-index collects the name of *every* individual mentioned in the scholia to the manuscripts. Writers often were owners. Owners or their heirs were vendors. Priests were scribes and witnesses. Sooner or later many individuals fit into place in their scribal family and we are able to put details into the genealogical trees. This section of the index is rather extensive but is invaluable in supplying the clues which help to date fragments.

In addition to these indexes there are separate printed cards which record information on different aspects of the codicology and codicography, from the wording of a minor *tashqil* to the width of margins and the number of lines per folio. Most of this information comes from secondary transfer from a working proforma which follows the format, *mutatis mutandis*, laid down by Professors Colette Sirat and M. Beit-Arié for their Hebrew palaeography project. As noted, these proformas are filled on annual working visits to Samaritan holdings internationally.

The first fruits of this project are now being systematised in the form of short studies of aspects of Samaritan scribal practices and manuscript history, which it is hoped will ultimately provide a detailed and comprehensive description of Samaritan manuscripts.

I. Manuscript Prices and Values

The Samaritan custom of recording in the scholia of their manuscripts the transfer of manuscripts either by gift or by sale and, in some cases, the prices paid for manuscripts, gives us some information, inadequate as it may be, about manuscript prices. By and large we can say very little about the true values of manuscripts for, while the information we have allows us to establish some comparisons, we cannot always translate the data to relative worth.[3]

Our limited information is further restricted by the fact that the prices paid for manuscripts are not always cited in the same currency, so that to establish a comparison we are forced to estimate exchange rates. For example, Bodley MS. Marsh 15 was sold in 1528 for 12 *dinars zahav* (i.e. gold) and changed hands again in 1554 for 120 coins described only as *Edomi*. Before we can compare these prices we must be able to establish a value for the *Edomi*,[4] whatever that coin may be. Furthermore, since the exchange rates for coins varied from era to era, even if a value is established in a specific instance it may not be assumed that such a value had long currency. In the instance cited above we should need to know whether the manuscript was appreciating or de-

[3] See Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt and Syria*, (hereafter CMSES) = *Numismatic Studies* 12, the American Numismatic Society, New York, 1964. This valuable study is concerned with coins minted in the region rather than with coins circulating in the region. It should be read in conjunction with Balog's "History of the Dirhem in Egypt", *Revue Numismatique*, VI[e] series, iii (1961), 107-145 (hereafter *HDE*), which provides useful data relating to exchange rates. S. D. Goitein, "The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times", *JESHO*, viii (1965), 1-46 (hereafter *ERG*), and the same author's *A Mediterranean Society*, Vol. 1, *The Economic Foundations*, Los Angeles and Berkely, 1967 (hereafter AMS), provide detailed exchange rates between *dirhem* and *dinar* but focus mainly on the period before 1300, a period for which our manuscripts provide but little information. A useful supplement is D. Sperber, "Islamic Metrology from Jewish Sources", *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 7th series, v (1965), 231-237 (hereafter *IMJS*). Some of the terms used in the scholia to the Samaritan manuscripts, but in none of the foregoing numismatic literature, are found in A Kindler "Coin Names and Values" in Oded Avissar, *Sefer Tiberiah* (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 69-70 (hereafter *CNV*).

[4] For a discussion see below. Kindler (loc. cit, p. 69) claims that the *Edomi* was a silver-plated copper coin.

preciating in value and at what rate, if we were to begin to guess at the exchange rate between gold dinars and the coin *Edomi*.

The greater part of our information about the prices paid for manuscripts falls within the period from the mid-14th century to the mid-16th, but we have some information from the 12th century to the 14th. It was in the period from 1350 onwards that manuscripts in increasing numbers began to come on to the market. We do not know whether this represents a change from the preceding eras; we simply have no information about the preceding period either because manuscripts of the time are no longer extant or else because they are too fragmentary to contain the scholia with the information that we require. Since there is no fixed term for the age of parchment, hence no physical reason why manuscripts written before the twelfth century should be in very short supply, we must assume that the dearth of complete or identifiable samples of this age indicates a period of non-productivity in the history of Samaritan scribal activity. From the late twelfth century and into the thirteenth there seems to have been a burst of scribal activity in Nablus and in the coastal Diaspora at Gaza and Zerifin.[5] In the mid-to the late 15th century there was a scribal flowering amongst scribes of the Munis clan in Egypt.[6] The levitical and priestly scribes were especially active in Damascus in the early 16th century and the priestly scribes never abated their activity in Nablus through this whole period. It is possible to identify some two hundred codices written between 1200 and 1500. This substantial number of copies was written within a diminishing Diaspora and is a factor which must have had a substantial effect on prices. Though the evidence is not entirely unanimous in its indications, and there are other factors which must be considered (such as the nature of a manuscript),[7] the number of manuscripts coming on the market seems to have caused a steady fall in their price.

The scholia of MS. NY 11010 (= Von Gall Gothic F)[8] is one of

[5] Abraham b. Israel b. Ephraim wrote his 74th Pentateuch in 1231, and Abi Berachatah of Zerifin wrote his 50th Torah in 1225.

[6] Ab Nessana of the Munis family wrote his 33rd Torah in 1485.

[7] See below for a discussion of this point.

[8] The scholia are printed in A. Von Gall, *Der hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner* (Giessen 1918; reprinted 1966), Introduction, p. xxxix (hereafter *HP*).

the few manuscripts from which we are able to draw an unequivocal example of the change in values resulting from the glut of manuscripts. This manuscript was the seventy-fourth Pentateuch written by the prolific scribe Abraham b. Israel b. Ephraim b. Joseph, in A.D. 1231, and it remained in his family. From scholia in other manuscripts we can often see how manuscripts passed, via marriage, from one branch of a family to another. This manuscript gives us no firm information about its history between 1231 and its appearance on the market in Egypt in 1462, where it sold for 34 dinars *min zahav mizri* = of Egyptian gold. This we assume to mean gold dinars minted in Egypt. In the mid-fifteenth century, only the Cairo mint was operating and producing gold dinars[9] weighing about 3.40 grams each.[10] In 1493 the manuscript was sold again, apparently having passed to the daughter of the purchaser of 1462,[11] probably deceased, and the daughter sold it for 25 gold dinars, again described as Egyptian gold. We may assume that they were in the same currency. Though we may suspect that the lower price received came in the train of a surplus of manuscripts on the market, we cannot be certain that this was the case. The sale may have been forced, the vendor being in desperate need of money on the death of her father or it may that the gold coin of 1493 had lost value against the earlier mintings. The latter is rather unlikely. Cairo gold coins diminished in size in the third quarter of the fifteenth century,[12] presumably because of the shortage of gold; hence their value would have held steady through the inflating price of gold. In view of the evidence from other manuscripts of generally falling sale prices we must assume that the five dinar devaluation in price was the result of market forces. The manuscript came on the market again in 1520, this time in Gaza, in the hands of a member of the Ikkara family, which seems to have been related to the clan member who bought it in 1493.[13] We are fortunate that once again the price is quoted in Egyptian gold, though this time it is but thirteen dinars. The low price in the sixteenth century might

[9] *CMSES*, p. 50 and the table, pp. 52-53.

[10] *CMSES*, p. 47.

[11] Puah, daughter of 'Abd Allah = 'Abd Yahweh, the man who purchased the manuscript in 1462.

[12] *CMSES*, p. 47.

[13] Perhaps his nephew; 'Abd Allah is the same name as 'Abd Hayehuv.

also reflect some wear and tear in the manuscript as well as market forces.[14] We see that the percentage change in value is 26 per cent for the thirty-one years between 1462 and 1493, and 48 per cent in the 27 years 1493-1520, or 0.83 per cent per annum for the first period and 1.77 per cent per annum for the second.

When we consider other manuscripts of the period we sometimes obtain quite similar results. The manuscript we now identify as CW 2478 a[15] was written in 1484 by 'Aphiph b. Sadaqa, one of the prolific scribes of the Munis family in Egypt, for a member of the Ikkara family. It was sold by the owner and bought for 24 gold dinars (perhaps of the Cairo mint) in 1487 in Egypt by the same man, Joseph ben Abd Yahweh, who bought the preceding manuscript. Thirteen years later, in 1500, the manuscript changed hands again, sold by the children of Joseph ben Abd Yahweh for 22 gold Egyptian dinars, an 8 per cent devaluation in thirteen years or 0.615 per cent per annum. In 1522, the manuscript was again sold in Egypt, this time for 14 dinars, a 37 per cent reduction in value over twenty two years or 1.68 per cent per annum devaluation. The manuscript was sold yet again in Egypt, in 1524, but this time, the price is given as 300 silver *Edomite* pieces, and we are left in the dark as to its equivalent value in Egyptian dinars. Without, at this time, trying to consider the nature of the *Edomite* silver piece, let us assume that the slide in manuscript values continued in the two years 1522-1524 at least at the same rate as that which prevailed hitherto, i.e. at the rate of 1.28 per cent per annum, for the manuscript overall, or 1.68 per cent per annum for the last period of the manuscript's history as established above. This is not an unreasonable assumption, as we shall show later. In this case we see that 300 *Edomite* silver coins are worth 14 dinars—3.36 per cent × 14 dinars = 13.53 dinars. Thus one dinar is worth about 22 *Edomite* pieces.[16] We must assume that the value was stated in *Edomites* because that was an available currency.

[14] I am unable to state at this time whether the paper additions to the manuscript, which is otherwise of parchment, had yet been made, or whether they belong to a later period.

[15] Cf. R. T. Anderson, *Studies in Samaritan Manuscripts and Artifacts*, (AASOR Monograph 1), Cambridge, Mass., 1978 (hereafter *SMA*), p. 15 f.

[16] This calculation produces a result identical with statements of the *dirhem* value of the dinar stated in the numismatic literature. It may be possible to use the percentage devaluation of a manuscript as a key to exchange rates when we are in doubt.

The nature of the *Edomite* piece is a matter of some difference of opinion. In his unpublished notes on the Cambridge Samaritan manuscripts, Herbert Loewe offered the opinion that the term *Edomite* meant Byzantine coins.[17] Anderson[18] quotes Robertson[19] as saying that the term means Roman coins. Neither of these descriptions is likely to be near the truth in that the *Edomite* is cited as an available coin in a number of manuscripts and it is not mentioned before the fifteenth century, when it must have made it appearance. The *Edomite*, whatever its nature, must have been readily available in Syria/Egypt and must have come from one of the local mints, presumably from the Cairo mint, which was the most important one of the region. Kindler[20] is almost certainly correct in directing us to the form *adomi*, red, rather than *edomi*, Edomite. We must doubt his explanation, however, that the coin was of low value, minted in Prussia of silver plate on a copper base.[21] He claims that the coin, when worn, showed the red copper through the silver plate, hence the term *adomi*. An alternative explanation is offered by Balog's suggestion that the theoretical exchange rate for the *dirhem* did not always represent the value of the silver as metal but rather the theoretical value as a coin of account. Balog notes that silver was often scarce, especially in Egypt, and the copper *fulus* was the real coin of circulation, its worth being expressed in its theoretical *dirhem* value.[22] He notes the introduction of the term *dirhem fals*, but this

[17] The notes are available at the University library, Cambridge. See p. 22 of these notes on Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 713, where Loewe translated *Edomi* as Byzantine.

[18] *SMA*, p. 21.

[19] Cf. E. Robertson, *Catalogue of the Samaritan Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library at Manchester* (Manchester, 1938 (hereafter *CJRL*, 1)), p. 12 and n. 2.

[20] *CNV*, p. 69. One must take note of the comments of E.J. Prawdzic-Golemberski and D.M. Metcalf, "The Circulation of Byzantine Coins on the Southern Frontiers of the Empire", *Numismatic Chronicle*, 7th series, iii (1963), 83-92. It would be unreasonable to suppose that any large number of Byzantine coins were still in common circulation in Egypt in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

[21] Kindler's source for this observation is far too late for our scholia. Though there is no doubt that Prussian and Austrian currency was in circulation in the Ottoman Empire, it does not seem to match what we know of the *adomi*. Cf. K.M. Mackenzie, "An Ottoman Countermark on a Maria Theresa Thaler", *Numismatic Circular*, 85, no. 10 (1977), pp. 429-430.

[22] *CMSES*, p. 44.

is unlikely to be the equivalent of the Samaritan *keseph adomi*, red-silver. The denomination of red-silver reminds us of yet a third alternative, in that in earlier centuries, when coins were weighed in transactions rather than simply being exchanged on an understood value basis, new coins were often kept for such transactions or else they were stripped of verdigris. Such cleaned silver coins were known as reddened.[23] While the appearance of the term *keseph adomi* at the end of the Mamluke period, some centuries after our evidence for the reddening of coins, would caution us against too facile an acceptance of this alternative, we must remember that there were in circulation 'black' *dirhems*, that is, *dirhems* of low silver content which were in circulation at the same time as the full silver *dirhem* and the *dirhem fals*. The 'black'-*dirhem* was worth less than the fine silver *dirhem*—perhaps as little as one third of the fine silver *dirhem* and even less.[24] It is most probable that the term *keseph adomi* is used to distinguish the silver *dirhem* from the black *dirhem*, and should be seen as a reference to the silver content of a coin as judged by the colour. However, the restriction of the term *adomi* to the end of the fifteenth century and to the sixteenth century A. D. should incline us to believe that the colour/content was cited on a newly-minted variety of fine silver coin. In any event, there appears to have been very little difference in value between the *dirhem* of fine silver content and the *dirhem adomi*. Our calculation above suggested that the *dirhem adomi* exchanged at twenty-two such *dirhems* per *dinar*, which is substantially the same as Balog's calculation of the silver *dirhem* exchange rate in the same period.[25]

A complicating factor in all our calculations is that the *dirhem fals* might not always have been cited as a coin of account but, on occasion, might have been cited in terms of its real worth, which was one silver *dirḥem* to 12-14 copper *dirhems*.[26] One suspects that the price quoted for MS. 90 Φ II 5 (see below, entry 20) in 1523, namely 2,000 "silver", is either 2,000 black *dirhems* or 2,000 copper *dirhems* in real value. If 2,000 fine silver *dirhems* were intended, the price would have been far too high for a single

[23] *AMS*, p. 378, ll, 31-36.

[24] *HDE*, p. 123. The 'black' *dirhem* is discussed several times in *HDE* and *ERG*.

[25] *HDE*, p. 134.

[26] *IMJS*, p. 235.

manuscript. We are aware, for example, that Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 713 was one of three manuscripts which sold as a group in 1532 and they brought, together, 2,400 silver *adomi*, which would make a price of 2,000 such coins, nine years earlier, far too high a price for a single manuscript. If the price quoted were in copper *dirhems*, then its *dinar* value would have been 2,000 + 12 = 166 silver *dirhems* + 18 = 9 dinars. This would not have been an unreasonable price for the manuscript. If the price is cited in black *dirhems*, the manuscript was valued at 50 dinars, which would have been rather high, if not entirely without precedent.

Another currency cited in the deeds of sale is given as *qashqeshet*, literally 'scales', in a scholium at the end of Leviticus in B.L. Or. MS. 2683, a paper manuscript, in which we are told that the manuscript sold for 700 *qashqeshet*. We are fortunate that the equivalent value is stated in silver coins, namely 55 silver coins, making the *dirhem* equivalent to 700 : 55 = 12.72 *qashqeshet*. This result is so close to the exchange rate noted previously for the silver *dirhem* and the copper *dirhem*, that the term *qashqeshet* must be a name for the latter, referring in the term 'scales' not to size but to colour, for the copper coins tended to be fairly large.[27] The term *qashqeshet* was probably being used in this instance when the copper coin was being valued in its own right rather than as a coin of account. Unfortunately, the name *qashqeshet* does not occur again in any manuscript known to the writer, so the equation between copper-bronze *dirhem* and *qashqeshet* cannot be verified.

Another coin description found in the scholia makes its appearance in the fifteenth century and is seen with some small frequency. This is the term *dinar aflori*. The name *flori*, *aflori*, or *florin*, was apparently applied to several different coins. Kindler records[28] that it was applied to a bronze or copper coin and to a large silver *dirhem* weighing about 3.43 grams and first minted in the reign of Sultan Mahmud, *c.* 1454. However, in our sources it applies exclusively to a gold coin. In the Samaritan scholia we find the description *dinar aflori zahav*, i.e. gold dinar aflori, or simply *dinar aflori*, but in such a context that the term is unequivocally referring to a gold coin. Most informative are the deeds of sale in B.L. Or. MS. 7562, a triglot of fourteenth century origin, which

[27] *CMSES*. The plates at the end of the volume amply illustrate this point.
[28] *CNV*, p. 69.

was sold at four intervals, three of them in the fifteenth century.[29] Only one of the deeds of sale is dated but, because of the sequence of the transactions, we are able to trace the movement of the manuscript from hand to hand and can place the transactions in chronological order even if we cannot put an absolute date to them.[30] In any event, since two of the transactions were witnessed by Pinḥas b. Abisha b. Pinḥas, who was high priest in Nablus at the beginning of the fifteenth century and probably died no later than 1446,[31] we must assume that this is the *terminus ad quem* for their dating.

The first sale in the series was that in which Abraham b. Jacob of the Gerah family paid his brother and sister 1,000 silver (*dirhems*?) for the manuscript. The sale cannot have been so much before 1415, for in that year we find Metuḥia buying the manuscript from Abraham for 28 gold (dinars). The third sale, sometime between 1415 and 1446, was that to Seth, who paid 40 dinars *aflori*, and Seth sold it to Joseph, also before 1446, for 35 dinars. The fifth sale was in 1755, when the manuscript was sold for fifty silver coins. The price paid in the first sale of 1,000 silver (*dirhems?*) seems to be remarkably high until one considers that this sale was at the beginning of the reign of the Burji dynasty of Mamluks, when the *dirhem* value was falling rapidly and the exchange rate with the dinar began to rise to about 40:1.[32] 1,000 silver (*dirhems*) then was probably worth about 25 gold dinars, but possibly as much as 28. The price paid in 1415 was either the same as that paid previously or gave the vendor a slight dinar profit. However, Metuḥia, the purchaser, undoubtedly made a substantial profit, as the dinar value seems to have moved up between the beginning of the fifteenth century and 1415. We can judge this not only from the numismatic literature but from Rylands Sam. MS.

[29] *HPS*, p. lxxxviii (= Gothic S). Von Gall's transcription of the scholium of 1755 errs by one century.

[30] Even though the author's index of Samaritan scribes locates and dates scribes from their manuscripts, it is very rare for the date of a scribe's birth or death to be known, unless there is explicit reference in a marginal note. Hence, the chronology can be stated with some certainty within broad limits, but finer details must be tentative.

[31] A. E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (hereafter *SL*) (Oxford, 1909), ii. p. xliv, shows Pinḥas as priest in Nablus and lists his death as being in 846 A.H. We do not know when he left Damascus for Nablus.

[32] *CMSES*, p. 44.

1, where we see the same men buying and selling from each other, Metuḥia selling the manuscript to Seth in 1415 at a price where the exchange rate between *dinar aflori* and *dirhem* was 1:26.[33] At this rate the price Metuḥia should have paid for his manuscript in 1415 was 38-39 *dinars aflori*, virtually the price he gained in selling. We also see from Rylands Sam. MS. 1 that prices were stable in the early part of the fifteenth century, the great devaluation of the end of the fifteenth century not yet being evident. In Rylands Sam. MS. 1 we see that the price of 25 dinars *aflori* was paid twice, in 1415 and 1420, and the transaction in 1407 for 650 silver (*dirhems*) translates also to 26 dinars. The discrepant prices in the scholia of B. L. Or. MS. 7562 are not because of a difference in value between the dinar *aflori* and the dinar but because the purchaser in 1415, Metuḥia, paid at least 12 dinars less than the value of the manuscript. The relationship between the dinar *aflori* and the dinar appears in the last recorded sale of the manuscript in the mid-fifteenth century for 35 dinars. This must reflect market values shortly before 1446, namely the beginning of the price slide.

Nevertheless, if the dinar and the dinar *aflori* are to be equated in value, we must find some explanation for the term *aflori*. If it does not relate to value it must relate to style. It is significant that the term begins to appear after the reform of Faraj (1399-1412) brought the sequin type gold coins from the Cairo mint into circulation. These sequins were minted to compete with the Venetian sequins and were so successful that they became the standard dinar of the dynasty.[34] It is not difficult to see that the Italian currency, the Florence—Florin—gave its name to the imitation introduced by Faraj in 1408. We assume, then, that the dinar *aflori* is the gold sequin dinar.

With these basic definitions and approximate values we are now able to consider the prices paid for Samaritan manuscripts over the years to see if any patterns emerge. We must remember that value lay not only in the state of a manuscript but in its writer's status[35] and in the nature of a manuscript. The high prices paid

[33] Cf. *HDE*, p. 135 for a discussion of the exchange rates under Muayyad and compare with *IMJS*, p. 235.

[34] *CMSES*, p. 43.

[35] This is the conclusion reached by I Ben Zvi, *Sefer Hashomronim* (hereafter *SH*) (revised edn., Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 264-291. In fact one finds that the style of the manuscript, when it is a polyglot including Targum or Targum and Arabic versions, seems to be more important in determining values. This point is demonstrated in the body of the text.

for B. L. Or. MS. 7562 probably depend upon the fact that it was a triglot.

1. Nablus MS. 5[36]
   1050 A.D./550 silver (*dirhems*?) 1364/520 silver (*dirhems*?)
2. Nablus MS. 21[37]
   1163/30 dinars 1195/25 dinars 1273/220 silver 1520/225 silver
3. Paris MS. 3
   1378 (Egypt)/300 pure silver 1578/10 dinars
4. B.L. MS. Cotton Claud. B. VIII
   1389/600 silver by weight *c.* 1400[38]/800 silver 1546/200 *adomi*
5. B.L. Add. MS. 22369
   1364/460 silver 1394/460 silver
6. BZ. MS. 17[39]
   1392/500 silver 1418/30 gold *aflori*
7. BZ MS. 15
   1396/800 silver 1405/650 silver
8. B.L. Or. MS. 1443
   1350/800 silver 1450/20 dinars *aflori* 1586/880 silver *adomi*
9. Nablus MS. 18
   1402/430 silver

[36] "Nablus" numbers depend on the numbering of the microfilms of the Samaritan manuscripts in Nablus, in the Institute of Hebrew Microfilms in Jerusalem. It would be most difficult to indentify the manuscripts briefly otherwise. Z. Shunnar, *Katalog Samaritanischer Handschriften*, i, Berlin, 1974, has another system of Nablus numbers, but they do not coincide with the Jerusalem system and I find them difficult to reconcile with notes made in Nablus. The Hebrew University films are accessible and provide a simple reference system. In some instances the Nablus manuscripts were first published by Ben Zvi, *SH*, and the Nablus numbers correspond with the numbers in *SH*, pp. 264-291 as follow. Nablus 5 = *SH*, 12, Nablus 10 = *SH*, 5, Nablus 12 = *SH*, 16 and Nablus 21 = *SH*, 1.

[37] The price in 1195 is stated as *mishqalim zahav*, apparently the gold was to be weighed.

[38] This date is adduced from the signature of Jacob the priest in Gaza, who was in office at the end of the fourteenth century, and the name of the purchaser, Sachwah b. Jacob, who is noted as a vendor of B.L. Or. 7562 before 1415 (see above).

[39] Ben Zvi numbers refer to the listing in *SH*, pp. 264-291. MS. BZ 17 is discussed in *SH*, pp. 283-284.

10. BZ MS. 11
    1471/2000 silver 1509/880 silver 1511/40 dinars
11. Rylands Sam. MS. 2
    1365/570 silver 1394/570 silver 1479/40 dinars
    1738/600 silver 1781/3000[40]
12. Nablus MS. 10
    1472/30 dinars 1477/13 dinars 1489/20 dinars
13. Sassoon MS. 402
    1534/480 silver *adomi* 1534/320 *adomi*
14. Sassoon MS. 403
    c. 1511/ 10 dinars 1511-1529/5 dinars 1529/4 dinars
    1534/8 dinars
15. Paris MS. 4
    1494/18 gold dinars 1578 Damascus/200 silver (pure)
16. Cambridge Trinity College MS. R. 15.55
    1469 half share sold/8 gold dinars
17. Berlin Or. MS. Fol 534
    1534/13 dinars *keseph*[41] 1536/10 dinars *keseph adinah*
18. Bodley Or. MS. 140
    1490/15 Egyptian gold dinars
19. Marsh MS. 15
    1528/12 gold dinars 1554/120 *adomi*
20. MS. 90 Φ II 5
    1523/2000 silver
21. Rylands Sam. MS. 1
    1407/650 silver *c.* 1415/25 dinars *aflori* *c.* 1420/25 dinars
    aflori 1531/280 *adomi*
22. Paris MS. 5
    1559/200 silver *adomi*
23. Nablus MS. 12
    1511/12 gold dinars
24. MS. 31472[42]
    1534/20 Egyptian dinars 1582/7 1/2 Egyptian dinars

[40] The price is given as *qarshiyah*, i.e. *grush* or *piastres*. See *CJRL*, 1. 30 and CNV, p. 69, where we are told that the *grush* in the 17th century was a silver coin weighing 20 grams, equal in value to the *piastre* in the Ottoman empire. Kindler states that the *grush* was equal in value to the European thaler.

[41] The word *keseph* probably means *money* in this context, rather than silver, and *keseph adina* in the same entry probably means uncirculated money rather than pure gold. See entry 36 and the discussion below.

[42] The manuscript identified by this film number has no Nablus number. It is in Nablus and belonged to one of the priests, Zadok b. Abisha.

25. MS. CW 2473
    1504/30 gold dinars Egyptian
26. Rylands Sam. MS. 28
    1533/250 silver
27. Petermann MS. 1
    1517/sold twice, 10 dinars each time
28. Cambridge, Add. Sam. MS. 713
    1532/2400 silver *adomi*
29. MS. 49 Φ II 10,11, etc.
    1563/140 *adomi*
30. MS. 53 Φ II 14, 15
    1549/50[43]/260 silver *adomi*
31. Nablus MS. 20
    1544/240 *adomi* 1570/320 *adomi*
32. Sassoon MS. 30
    1431/7 dinars 1510/18 dinars
33. MS. CW 2478 a
    1487/24 dinars 1500/22 gold Egyptian 1522/14 1525/300 *adomi*
34. MS. NY 11010
    1462/34 gold 1493/25 gold 1520/13 gold
35. B.L. Add. MS. 21581
    1441/335 silver 1446/320 silver
36. Leningrad MS. T2 (= Von Gall I)
    1489/8 dinars 1550/4 large gold 1589 twice/11 gold dinars—11 gold dinars *keseph*
37. Sassoon MS. 404
    1489/25 dinars 1515/16 dinars 1534/16 dinars
38. MS. CW 2484
    1474/13 gold 1477/15 gold 1517/13 gold 1555/100 *adomi*
39. Leipzig MS. (= Von Gall A)
    1401/400 silver 1497/31 gold dinars Egyptian 1503/31 gold dinars Egyptian
40. Nablus MS. 4
    1486/50 gold dinars 1517/60 gold dinars

[43] For this dating see below. The date suggested in A. E. Harkavy, *Catalog der hebraischen und samaritanischen Handschriften der kaiserlichen öffentlichen Bibliothek in St. Petersburg*, ii (St. Petersburg, 1875 (hereafter *CStP*)), 140-141, is wrong and can be restored accurately.

41. BZ. MS. 17
    1392/500 silver 1418/30 gold dinars *aflori*
42. Leningrad MS. T 1 (= Von Gall H)
    1452/520 silver 1497/200 silver *adomi* = 16/24th of value.
43. MS. CB 752 (= BZ 14)
    1440/800 silver = 1/2 of value. 1463/40 dinars = 3/4 of value
44. BZ. MS. 20
    after 1477/1400 silver = 3/4 of the value
45. Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 714
    2000 silver 1361/30 dinars = 1/2 value, 1413
46. BZ. MS. (Jerusalem MS.[44])
    1532/2400 silver *adomi* (See Cambridge Add. 713)

Before considering the changes in values of manuscripts as they may be deduced from this list, we must consider the implications of the deed of sale of 1589 in entry 36. From this we learn that the term *keseph* may be used in its meaning of 'money' in these deeds of sale as well as in its meaning of 'silver'.[45] This becomes clear from the description of the sale price of the manuscript in *zahav*, gold and *keseph*. There is always the risk, then, when we use the translation silver for *keseph*, in the table above, that the deed was less specific and meant simply money. That risk must be taken if the sale prices are to be examined and evaluated.

We can also infer from the fact that the term *adomi* does not occur until the end of the fifteenth century that fragments of scholia in which this term occurs also belong to this era, from *c.* A.D. 1490-A.D. 1580. In this circumstance we may, for example, set aside Harkevy's[46] reconstruction of the date of the scholium in MS. 53 Φ 14, 15, where he inserts 800 as the missing date, in favour of the more likely 900, making the date of the scholium 956 A.H. = A.D. 1549/1550.

[44] The manuscript is one of three sold together in 1532 for 2400 *dirhems*. The published data give no manuscript number, nor does the film. The manuscript is not listed in the handwritten catalogue of the Samaritan manuscripts in the Hebrew University library and is housed separately from the others. It is described by Ben Zvi both in *SH*, pp. 251-263, and in *Yerushalayim*, ii (1928), 291-305. The description in both places includes the scholia of the two other manuscripts included in the sale.

[45] See note 39.

[46] *CStP*, pp. 140-141.

Entries 42, 43, 44, above emphasise the very important fact that only a share in a manuscript may be sold, the whole manuscript remaining in the possession of one or other of the owners. Manuscripts were valuable possessions, their prices as cited being in some cases as much as the salary of a minor communal official for two or more years.[47] When an owner died he could bequeath his manuscript to more than one heir and we often learn of one of the owners putting his or her share on the market. In the case of entry 44 (BZ MS. 20), the manuscript appears to have been written for Abd Yahweh b. Jacob b. Joseph, of the Manasseh family, in 1477. We assume that Abd Yahweh died not long afterwards and the manuscript was bequeated to his children, three sons (one of whom was Jacob) and a daughter. Our undated record shows Jacob buying out his brothers. The payment of the sum in silver rather than in gold dinars would point to a date early in the sixteenth century when our data leads us to believe that the majority of transactions were cited in dinars. The sum paid, 1400 silver *dirhems*, represents three-quarters of the value of the manuscript, which must then have been valued for this transaction at 1867 *dirhems*. Whether that was its real price is debatable. If the price is in fine silver *dirhems*, the manuscript was being valued at between 100 and 74 dinars, an inordinately high price. If the manuscript was priced in black *dirhems*, the dinar value was between 33 and 24, not outrageous for its day, but rather high in view of the decline in manuscript values in the sixteenth century. One cannot help but wonder whether Jacob was being generous to his brothers and sister and offering them a far better price than the manuscript was worth out of loyalty. The arrangement found in the scholium of MS. CB 752 (entry 43) shows us a far more complex situation in which one person owned half the manuscript and the other half was shared between three people, one of whom owned a quarter share, the other two sharing the fourth quarter between them.

Using the data we are able to glean from internal sources and from the numismatic evidence, in so far as it allows us to decide between its contradictions, it is possible to establish some *dinar/dirhem* exchange rates. These conversions are necessary if we are to be able to compare prices received for Samaritan manu-

[47] *AMS*, III, Preface, p. x.

scripts over the centuries, as all prices must be shown in comparable currency. In the table which follows *dirhem/dinar* exchange rates are presented for the dates for which we have evidence. Where there is substantial fluctuation in the earlier period it appears that we are dealing with the black *dirhem* rather than the fine silver coin. We cannot be certain that the same does not always apply in later centuries; the evidence for 1379, for example, would lead us to believe that this is probable.

1000-1100 various rates between 35-40 *dirhems* per dinar.[48]
1126 1:40 black (*dirhems*?)
1145 1:13.5
1166 1:13
1187 1:13.5
1199 1:40 black *dirhems*
1217 1:40 black *dirhems*
1223 1:40 black *dirhems*
1232 1:40 black *dirhems*
1258 1:28
1260 1:28.5
1280 1:13.5
1289 1:20
1301 1:13.5
1337 1:13.33
1340 1:25
1342 1:20 1:11
1361 1:20
1379 1:13.5 1:30
1382 1:30
c. 1400-1412 devaluation of silver 1:30-1:40
1415 1:30
1415 1:26
1439 1:24
1479 1:25
1498 1:21.5
1500 1:22
Period of economic confusion to the collapse of the Mamluke dynasty, 1517: evidence not available.[49]

[48] See note 1 above for the details of the literature, numismatic and documentary, from which the data is drawn.

[49] Although the direct evidence is lacking, our calculations presented above

From these exchange rates we are able to make approximate conversions into *dinars*, of values given in *dirhems*, and we can thus estimate approximate changes in the values of manuscripts. However, since we can never be certain that values expressed in *dirhems* represent fine silver rather than 'black' *dirhems*, we cannot be certain that the calculation is always correct. The serial numbers below relate to the entries above in which the actual values as given in the manuscripts are presented. Thus, serial 1 refers to Nablus MS. 5. In the presentation below the prices for which the manuscripts changed hands are stated in *dinars* and an indication of the changing value of the manuscript is given as a percentage appreciation or depreciation between the dates of each deed of sale recorded for the manuscript, and overall for the recorded history of each manuscript to show its long-term change in value. *Dinar* prices are not rounded off, since there is no evidence that a conversion was intended by the vendors.

1. 13.75 dinars, 26 dinars. An appreciation of 48 per cent in 314 years or 0.15 per cent per year.
2. 30 dinars, 25 dinars, 16.29 dinars, 10.22 dinars. The manuscript showed a steady depreciation in value over the whole period. This depreciation was of the order of 17 per cent in the first 32 years, 36 per cent in the following ninety years and 37.5 per cent in the next two and three-quarter centuries. In terms of annual depreciation the figures are 0.53 per cent, 0.40 per cent, 0.13 per cent respectively. The long-term depreciation was of the order of 0.09 per cent per annum.
3. On the assumption that the contradictory exchange rates for 1379 refer to fine silver as against black *dirhems*, the relevant values are 22.22 dinars, 10 dinars. In this case we see a depreciation in the value of the manuscript of the order of 55 per cent in 200 years or 0.275 per cent per annum.
4. 20 dinars, 20 dinars, 10 dinars. The manuscript remained stable in price for the first eleven years for which we have evidence, and then depreciated by some 50 per cent in the following 146 years; that is, at the rate of 0.34 per cent. The overall devaluation was about 0.31 per cent per annum.
5. Our information about exchange rates for 1364 is lacking. On the assumption that it was close to that pertaining in 1361,

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suggest that the *dirhem* had a base exchange rate of 1 :22 in the sixteenth century. See *CMSES*, p. 44, and *HDE*, p. 145.

our estimates of value are 23 dinars, 15.33 dinars. A 33 per cent devaluation in 30 years or 1.1 per cent per annum.

6. 25 dinars, 30 dinars. A 16 per cent appreciation in 26 years at 0.61 per cent per annum.
7. 26 dinars, 21 dinars. A depreciation of 20 per cent in 9 years or 2.22 per cent per annum.
8. 40 dinars, 20 dinars, 40 dinars. A 50 per cent loss in value in 100 years at 0.5 per cent per annum, followed by a 50 per cent appreciation in 136 years at 0.36 per cent per annum.
9. No data for comparison.
10. 80 dinars, 40 dinars, 40 dinars. A 50 per cent depreciation in the first 38 years at 1.31 per cent per annum. Overall depreciation at the rate of 1.25 per cent per annum.
11. 42 dinars, 42 dinars, 40 dinars, no further equivalents. We see a depreciation in 114 years of 5 per cent or 0.40 per cent per annum.
12. 30 dinars, 13 dinars, 20 dinars. A depreciation overall of 33 per cent in 18 years or 1.8 per cent per annum.
13. A depreciation of 33 per cent in one year.
14. 10 dinars, 5 dinars, 4 dinars, 8 dinars. A depreciation overall at the rate of 0.8 per cent per annum, with 50 per cent depreciation in the first period and a 50 per cent appreciation in the last five years.
15. 18 dinars, 9 dinars. A 50 per cent depreciation in 84 years or 0.6 per cent per annum.
16. No data.
17. 13 dinars, 10 dinars. A 24 per cent depreciation in 2 years or 12 per cent per annum.
18. Inadequate data.
19. 12 dinars, 5.45 dinars. A 58 per cent depreciation in 26 years or 2.1 per cent per annum.
20. Inadequate data.
21. 25 dinars, 25 dinars, 25 dinars, 12.72 dinars. A depreciation of 50 per cent in the sixteenth century and a maintenance of value for most of its history.

22, 23. Inadequate data.

24. A depreciation of 63.5 per cent in 48 years of 1.32 per cent per annum.

25-30. Inadequate data.

31. An increase of 33 per cent in 27 years or 1.2 per cent appreciation per annum.

32. An appreciation at the rate of 0.78 per cent per annum.
33-34. See the discussion above.
35. 24.8 dinars, 23.8 dinars. A 5 per cent depreciation in 5 years or 1 per cent per annum.
36. A depreciation of 50 per cent in 61 years or 0.81 per cent per annum, a depreciation followed by an appreciation in 49 years of 175 per cent or 3.57 per cent per annum. Overall an appreciation of 28 per cent in 100 years or 0.28 per cent per annum.
37. A depreciation overall of 36 per cent in 45 years or 0.80 per cent per annum. Of this period the full depreciation took place in the first 26 years, i.e. at a depreciation rate of 1.38 per cent per annum.
38. 13 dinars, 15 dinars, 13 dinars, 4.5 dinars. Overall a depreciation of 0.41 per cent per annum in the 81 year period.
39. 30 dinars, 31 dinars, 31 dinars. A stable price for the manuscript.
40. A 20 per cent increase in 31 years or 0.64 per cent per annum.
41. 37 dinars, 30 dinars. A 19 per cent depreciation in 26 years or 0.73 per cent per annum.
42. 20.8/26, 12.5 dinars or a 40 per cent depreciation in 45 years or 0.88 per cent per annum.
43. 33 dinars 1/2 value or 66 dinars; 40 dinars 3/4 value or 53 dinars, a 20 per cent depreciation at 0.86 per cent per annum.

It will be seen from these figures, which cannot lay claim to be more than a reasonable approximation in the light of the evidence available, that the majority of the manuscripts for which we have records depreciated in value over the long term, though that depreciation might be accelerated at times. Only seven of the manuscripts under discussion appreciated in value at all or appreciated in value for a short period. The figures are not entirely consistent, but it is fairly clear that the greatest period of depreciation in prices was at the time of the marked contraction of the Samaritan diaspora at the beginning of the sixteenth century, perhaps in the first thirty five years of the sixteenth century when the Samaritans were persecuted and their High Priest forced to migrate from Nablus to Damascus.[50] At this period manuscripts were depreciating at the rate of 2 per cent per annum and more.

[50] See my "An Unpublished Fragment of a Samaritan Torah Scroll", *Bulletin*, lxiv (1981-82), 386-406, for details of this period.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, when political conditions were somewhat more stable and perhaps the supply of Pentateuch manuscripts began to be balanced by a demand for liturgical works and the beginnings of a market for manuscripts in Europe, prices started to rise a little. Our information is inadequate, but the majority of the rises in manuscript prices belong to this era. As far as our limited information allows us to see, the most stable period for manuscript prices was in the eleventh-twelfth centuries, a period for which we have relatively few manuscripts or manuscript fragments, perhaps because not many manuscripts were then being written.

So far as we can see, it was the nature of the manuscript rather than the scribe which influenced the relative rather than the comparative value of manuscripts. Manuscripts to which Ben Zvi has given the title *Pinchasia*,[51] as being of special importance, do not seem to have brought any higher price than manuscripts from the pens of non-priestly scribes. It would have been interesting to have had information about the values attached to such a manuscript as Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 1846, known as "the fire tried" (because it survived a fire), but we have no more information than that it was sold for 25 *shekels* cash in A. D. 1149. We note that an attractive manuscript like Rylands Sam. MS. 1, which even today is in an exceptional state of preservation and was written by the prolific and able Abi Berachatah, maintained its value throughout the period of depreciation in the fifteenth century and only in the period of rapid devaluation in manuscript prices in the sixteenth century did it lose some 50 per cent of its value (entry 21). Of the manuscripts which appreciated in value in the period for which we have information we must note Sassoon MS. 30 (entry 32), which illustrates the point that fashions in manuscripts may change and, in changing, may effect the price. The manuscript, which is by an unnamed scribe, most certainly belongs to the thirteenth century when the Samaritans wrote some rather small manuscripts—octavo rather than quarto or folio—and a small octavo at that.[52] The reason for the change in size is

[51] *SH*, p. 264.

[52] The manuscript was approximately 4 inches x 3 3/4 inches. Rylands Samaritan MS. 7 is not one manuscript but a collection of manuscript fragments of about the same tiny octavo size, indicating that the type was once in rather common vogue. Twenty different manuscripts are represented in Rylands Sam. MS. 7.

uncertain but the same fashion is apparently contemporary in western manuscripts.[53] It is probable that the price of 7 dinars in 1431 was an uncommonly low one; the manuscript was of a style no longer fashionable and therefore commanded a price lower than any other manuscript that was sold in that decade for which we have data. The rise in price in a period when most manuscript prices were falling suggests that as a manuscript it may have returned to fashion and that its real value is expressed in the 18 dinar price in 1510. We see that bilingual manuscripts and triglots were valued more than monoglot manuscripts. If we consider the prices paid for Rylands Sam. MS. 2 (entry 11), a bilingual text, Nablus MS. 4 (entry 40), Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 714 (entry 45), both bilingual, and B. L. Or. MS. 7562, a triglot, we see that these manuscripts brought higher prices than the monoglots even when the latter were finely written. One exception to this rule is the price paid for BZ MS. 11 (entry 10), which seems to have commanded a substantial price at every sale for reasons that are not at all clear. Its scribe was not especially distinguished nor does there seem to have been anything exceptional about the manuscript that would offer a good reason for the inflated prices paid for it. One can only suggest that its initial sale within one family and its later transmission to two heirs of an owner may have helped to keep its price up.

All in all, our information is patchy and the interpretation of prices paid depends on inadequate information about exchange rates. Nevertheless, we have been able to see some trends in sale prices of manuscripts. We can summarise these as follows: (1) Prices tended to fall rather than rise in the lifetime of the manuscript. (2) Prices rose or fell in response to market values which included the number of manuscripts coming on to the market, fashions in manuscript writing, whether the manuscript was in more than one script or language, and its condition. (3) By and large the status of the scribe had no marked effect on the market price.

[53] I am indebted for this information to Dr. Frank Taylor, former Principal Keeper at the John Rylands University Library. One would like to know more about the influence of European scribal customs on the Middle East, but we are inadequately informed at present.