

# PROBLEMS IN EPIGRAPHY AND PALAEOGRAPHY : THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE IN SAMARITAN SOURCES<sup>1</sup>

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SAMARITAN epigraphy has an especial interest for Hebrew S epigraphers and epigraphers of other Semitic languages. The corpus of inscriptions is by no means considerable<sup>2</sup> and, as a result, the problems of method are more visible and, perhaps, more readily considered, than say, the problems of method in treating Hebrew inscriptions. There is, moreover, a long-standing division among Samaritan scholars about the limitations and efficacy of palaeographic studies of Samaritan script,<sup>3</sup> and amongst Samaritan palaeographers there has been a tacit, if unstated recognition of the need to separate epigraphic from manuscript materials. (See below for more detailed discussion.) These factors keep alive questions of method and allow us to reopen the discussion of problems which now seem to be beyond the concern of Hebrew and Aramaic epigraphers as though they had been resolved once and for all. Since, as it is hoped to demonstrate, the methodological problems in Samaritan epigraphy respond to, and are examined by, data drawn from other areas of Samaritan studies and cannot be treated in abstraction

<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered in an abbreviated form at the Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, August 1977.

<sup>2</sup> There is no complete catalogue of Samaritan inscriptions but a useful checklist, especially of some of the secondary literature, is to be found in S. Yonick, "The Samaritan Inscription from Siyagha; A Reconstruction and Restudy", *Studii Biblicii Franciscani, Liber Annuus*, xvii (1967), 162-221 (= *SIS*). This list should be supplemented by reference to S. Noja, "Contributions à la Bibliographie des Samaritains", *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, xxxiii (n.s. xxiii) (Napoli, 1973), 98-113.

<sup>3</sup> The literature is surveyed in my "Samaritan Majuscule Palaeography: Eleventh to Twentieth Century", in *BULLETIN*, lx, No. 2, pp. 434-61 and lxi, No. 1, 15-41 (= *SMP*).

from their cultural setting, they emphasize the possible need for a similar treatment of Hebrew and Aramaic texts.

### *The Terminology*

One root of our current problems in palaeography is the lack of distinctive terms which can be applied exclusively either to the study of inscriptions on hard-surfaced materials or to manuscripts on soft-surfaced materials. It is true that there is a tendency in scholarly writing on the subject of ancient calligraphy to use the word epigraphy/epigraphic with some degree of conformity with dictionary definitions such as "The study of (ancient) inscriptions on stone, metal, etc."<sup>1</sup> However, the term palaeography/palaeographic is not restricted in use to either the study of manuscript or stone calligraphy, but applies to the study of letter forms universally, though some scholars may restrict the term to manuscript writing.<sup>2</sup> The blurring of whatever boundaries there may be in the definition of these terms has encouraged scholars to treat all types of Samaritan writing, on all sorts of surfaces, in identical fashion, without regard to the particular characteristics imparted to the script by the material bearing the message, or even of the nature of the message itself. This has been the situation in recent writing about Samaritan palaeography,<sup>3</sup> and this characteristic may have

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. C. Wyld, *The Universal Dictionary of the English Language* (14th impression), London, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> N. Avigad, "The Palaeography of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Documents", *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, iv (*Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*) (Jerusalem, 1965), 56-87, seems to draw a distinction between epigraphic and palaeographic materials (paragraph 2). With sound scholarly sense he separates his discussion of manuscript and the ossuary inscriptions. Nevertheless, he uses the term palaeography to describe the discussion process of both types of material. Such is the latitude of the technical vocabulary.

<sup>3</sup> For example, J. D. Purvis in his various works, which include detailed palaeographic discussion, makes no distinction at all between epigraphic and manuscript sources. Cf. his *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect*, Harvard, 1968 (= *SPSS*), and "The Palaeography of the Samaritan Inscription from Thessalonica", *BASOR*, ccxxi (1976), 121-123 (= *PSIT*). However, a more recent study by Purvis and Strugnell, "An Early Samaritan Decalogue Inscription in the Israel Museum", *The Israel Museum News*, xi. 87-91 (= *DIIM*), restricts its scope to a discussion of the stone inscriptions alone.

developed under the influence of a parallel phenomenon in studies of Hebrew and Aramaic palaeography.<sup>1</sup> Not only is it true that epigraphic studies of the Samaritan materials in which the authors have taken careful account of the physical properties of the inscribed material are uncommon, it is also the case that the effect of the subject matter of the inscriptions on their form, and the existence of local styles of writing with their idiosyncratic details, tend not to be given the full evaluation which they require.<sup>2</sup> The pursuit of a developmental sequence of letter shapes for the sake of their chronological keys which is dissociated from the study of the material substances on which texts are written and which ignore cultural and local values is likely to give misleading results. When we have so few inscriptions in our corpus, our examination has to be of the utmost rigour to reduce to the minimum the pitfalls which are always present in palaeographic studies.<sup>3</sup>

In this respect Samaritan palaeographers have lessons to learn from those Hebrew palaeographers whose basic concern is with manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> One cannot but be impressed by the fact that in the new Hebrew palaeography, as developed in the work of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique,<sup>5</sup> a goodly portion of the palaeographer's task focuses on the classification

<sup>1</sup> See J. L. Teicher's comments on the palaeographic treatment of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the early 1950s, "The Dead Sea Scrolls—Documents of the Jewish Christian Sect of Ebionites", *JSS*, ii (1951), 84 ff. The situation seems not to have changed very much since then. While Teicher's views about the sect of the scrolls are not very acceptable today, his strictures on palaeographic method are still valid.

<sup>2</sup> A list of the basic properties which need to be investigated in a palaeographic study is presented *en passant* by R. D. Biggs, "On Regional Cuneiform Handwritings in Third Millennium Mesopotamia", *Approaches to the Study of the Ancient Near East, A Volume of Studies Offered to Ignace Jay Gelb* (Rome, 1973), pp. 39-46. Biggs's list inclines to the examination of physical properties though content is not excluded.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *La Paléographie Hébraïque Médiévale*, Paris, 1974 (Colloques Internationaux Du Centre National De La Recherche Scientifique) (= *PHM*), especially M. Beit-Arié, "Les Premiers Résultats Codicologiques de l'Enquête sur les Manuscrits Hébreux Médiévaux", pp. 45-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* The term "New Hebrew palaeography" is used to distinguish the approach described in the colloquy from all studies of the scripts alone, as, for example, some of the palaeographic studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

of the materials on which writing takes place and on the technique of codicology in vogue at the time when given manuscripts were written.<sup>1</sup> Only when this firm ground is laid does the comparison of scripts begin to have some meaning. While techniques of codicology are not relevant to Samaritan epigraphy, they are certainly relevant for studies of Samaritan palaeography: only a small part of the groundwork has been laid.<sup>2</sup> A parallel to this codicological study relevant to epigraphy would be the sort of studies of the lapidary art that are to be found in the writings of the Greek and Latin epigraphers. Their studies are well advanced,<sup>3</sup> but, as far as I am aware, there are no such published studies of the Samaritan lapidary art with details relating to the stonemasons, their identity, their tools, drafting methods, cutting methods and their workshop personnel.<sup>4</sup> Yet such knowledge would appear to be a precondition of worthwhile epigraphic discussions. These two lacunae in our knowledge must add undue weight for the Samaritan palaeographer to the problems which stem from the fact that the writing of scribes is not likely to be uniform on materials of different types. The ductus of a Samaritan letter on a soft-surfaced material such as vellum or paper is necessarily different from the ductus of the same letter on a hard-surfaced material such as stone or metal. In Samaritan majuscule script as it appears on membrane surfaces there are various points in almost every letter which serve as the fulcrum for the pen. These

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, Paris, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, such data as exists is scattered, but a start in assembling and commenting thereon has been made in *SMP*.

<sup>3</sup> The evidence for Roman stonemasons is summarized in Giancarlo Sussini, *The Roman Stonecutter* (translated by A. M. Dabrowski), Oxford, 1973. See especially his bibliographical notes for evidence of the volume of work already done.

<sup>4</sup> J. Bowman and S. Talmon, "Samaritan Decalogue Inscriptions", *BJRL*, xxxiii (1950-1), 211-36 (= *SDI*), make some observations on the way the stone was worked. J. Pedersen, *Inscriptiones Semiticae*, Oslo, 1925 (= *IS*), implies in his preface that some of the Hebrew inscriptions in the Ustinow collection were described from the lapidary point of view by Poulsen in a dissertation in Oslo in 1920. This latter work is not accessible to me. M. Baillet, "Deux Inscriptions Samaritaines De La Region De Naplouse", *Revue Biblique*, lxxi (1964), 57-74 (= *DIS*), gives a satisfactory description of the materials of the inscriptions, but ignores important cultural factors in the writing.

points are essentially part of the letter.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, the chisel does not move as freely or in the same way as the pen ; the chisel has no need of a fulcrum point on a letter since it carves the material slowly ; it cuts rather than glides, and, in any case, the chisel is lifted from the stone in carving. Carved letters, then, have their own idiosyncracies, and variations in letter form between scripts could be more a reflection of the type of surface inscribed than a reflection of chronological development. The palaeographer is obliged to take cognisance of the physical properties of materials and their effects on the writing he studies ; he must observe due caution in comparing scripts on different types of surface. It would be helpful in establishing sound methodology if scholars could determine to restrict the use of the term epigraphy to the study of writing on stone and hard-surfaced materials only, and apply the term palaeography only to the study of writing on soft-surfaced materials such as leather, papyrus and paper. Whilst this restrictive usage might draw finer lines than the dictionary allows, there are clear methodological gains for scholarship.

### *The Materials and their Effects*

A simple demonstration of the physical effects of material on writing is the plain fact that the size of the surface to be inscribed must affect the presentation of the message to be written thereon, i.e., the size of the writing and the length of the message, whether it is couched concisely or in a prolix fashion.<sup>2</sup> Not quite so

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *SMP* for a discussion, and see further below. The term majuscule is used to describe the square form of the letter, in contrast to the cursive form. Both cursive and square forms can be written in larger and smaller sizes, but since the tradition developed amongst Samaritan palaeographers of using the term majuscule for the square script, and since such terms as "book-hand" or "uncial" are not at all appropriate, the term majuscule has been retained here. E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, Oxford, 1971 (= *GMAW*), used the term "capitals" to advantage (p. 3), but such a term would be misleading if applied to Samaritan script.

<sup>2</sup> Bowman and Talmon, *SDI*, p. 216, suggest that there used to be a special abbreviated version of the Decalogue for use on "stone inscriptions where the unwieldy material imposed a 'laconic' style". Cf. also Z. Ben Hayyim, "A Samaritan Inscription of the Eleventh Century", *BJPES*, xii (1945-6), 74 (= *SIEC*), where he notes the abbreviation of Biblical passages on Samaritan inscriptions.

obvious, but nevertheless demonstrable, is the fact that the size of the material may also affect the freedom with which letters are written and/or their size and shape. For example, the letters on lines 7-9 of the Leeds Samaritan Decalogue inscription (= Decalogue inscription 1)<sup>1</sup> are slightly smaller than the letters in the preceding lines, for the scribe appears to have been pressed for space.<sup>2</sup> This shortage of space appears to have affected not only the size of the letters but also their internal proportions; for example, the area of the square head of *Beth* is proportionately different between the upper and lower lines (of the inscription proper). The internal proportions of letters are often the best evidence of chronological change in the Samaritan script,<sup>3</sup> yet here they appear to have been affected by lapidary concerns. Palaeographic discussion of this script should note such data and give it due weight.

Not nearly so recondite an example of the material influencing the shape of the letters inscribed thereon—an example which verifies the need for a rather cautious approach to Samaritan epigraphic discussion—is that of the mosaic inscription from the Samaritan synagogue at Salbit near Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Over the whole mosaic the artisan appears to have had some difficulties with the representation of curves. The arms of the menorah<sup>5</sup> are not parallel, leaves on the rosettes are asymmetrical and diamond lozenges are not uniform. The artisan seems not to have been especially skilled at his profession. We may judge also that he was not a trained scribe, for the letters he presents are irregular, and, like the shapes of the decorative mosaic, seem

<sup>1</sup> The numbering of the Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions follows that suggested by J. Strugnell, "Quelques Inscriptions Samaritaines", *Revue Biblique*, lxxiv (1967), 555-80 (= *QIS*).

<sup>2</sup> *SDI*, p. 214. One cannot help but wonder whether something like Maas's Law (*GMAW*, p. 6) could be applied to this inscription.

<sup>3</sup> See *SMP* for a detailed discussion.

<sup>4</sup> The inscription has been studied several times. Cf. E. L. Sukenik, "The Samaritan Synagogue at Salbit, Preliminary Report", *Bulletin I* (Louis M. Rabinowitz Fund for the Exploration of Ancient Synagogues) (1949), pp. 26-32, Pl. xvi; S. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts* (= *HS*), London, 1954-7, 1971, 2 vols.; Z. Safrai, "Samaritan Synagogues in the Romano Byzantine Period", *Cathedra*, iv (July 1977), 84-112 (Hebrew); E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, i. 262 f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Safrai, p. 99 for a convenient illustration.

to be guided by the nature of the mosaic material rather than by their palaeographic needs. For example, 'ayin in the word 'olam, is not complete, one single mosaic square in black being needed for completion. The second 'ayin in va'ed is rather different in shape. Lamed appears twice, differently; vav appears twice differently. In no case is any ligature shown and in no case is any curved stroke presented. The variation between the letters seems to come where one would expect to find a curved form in a manuscript sample of the letter, and the variation apparently arises from unsuccessful attempts to indicate a curved stroke in the mosaic. On this basis one would be tempted to consider this script a rather unsuitable specimen to be included in a chronological series. While one can propose a date, on archaeological grounds, for the synagogue housing the inscription, it would be inappropriate to consider this script to be a good example of its period against which other scripts are measured, in view of its physical peculiarities.<sup>1</sup>

We must now consider in more detail some of the effects of the materials on which an inscription is written on the form of the letters of the inscription.

As a preliminary observation it may be said that there is a specific monumental style for stone inscriptions in which letters are formed in a rather different way from that in which they are written in manuscript.<sup>2</sup> We are able to make this judgment

<sup>1</sup> In considering this inscription Birnbaum spoke in terms of the development of some of these letters into curved forms via strokes of the pen (*HS*, i. 106). It is all the more surprising that after he saw the connection between these forms and the curved forms of manuscript he went on to say, in discussing 'ayin, "Ay is a quadrilateral. Possible development: the top stroke became horizontal, the left one thereby vertical, the right one was broken into an angle (transition form?)", i.e., terms which suggest that he saw this script as representative.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. Spoer, "Notes on Some New Samaritan Inscriptions", *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, xxx (1908), 284-291 (= *NSI*), claims that the plates in his articles are photographs of squeezes which he made. If these plates are true photographs (Spoer noted that he was obliged to blacken the letters, probably before, and for the purpose of, photography), then they may be cited as a handy exemplar of the difference between the written forms and the carved forms. In the plates of engraved inscriptions, letter shapes appear to have been cut without relation to the written ductus. This is only to be expected, since inscriptions are carved in strokes with a tool which is removed from the stone.

because there are dated stone inscriptions which overlap the period for which we have manuscripts. For example, the inscription from Kfar Qalil<sup>1</sup> is dated to A.D. 1214 at which period we have several manuscripts of equivalent age for comparison.<sup>2</sup> The Kfar Qalil inscription is in relief, rather than being engraved, and a comparison of the Samaritan inscriptions on relief with those which are engraved reminds us that what is true of one type of inscription may not be true of the other, since there are differences which devolve directly upon the method of execution of the inscription. We soon perceive that letters on inscriptions in relief tend to be proportioned differently from engraved letters. In all the Nablus examples available to us and on some of the Damascus specimens,<sup>3</sup> letters in relief are apparently affected by the need to mark clearly defined lines, often parallel, for each stroke. Every stroke, then, has a bulk of its own which needs to be accommodated to both the height and width of each letter. Thus, the letters tend to be larger than they are on engraved inscriptions and they lose their proper proportion, either being stretched to allow for the width of strokes or else strokes which are normally vertical are bent to allow the relief letter to "crab" into its allotted space. One assumes that this results from the artisan using a single guide or other line to mark each stroke which changes proportion as cutting progresses. On the Kfar Qalil inscription we see that 'aleph, he and tav are bent sideways. Nun is reduced in height and other letters are stretched laterally to leave room between bulky strokes. This lateral expansion and vertical compression is even more marked on Strugnell's Nablus inscription no. 6., and his lintel inscription no. 5.<sup>4</sup> In all these relief inscriptions it is apparent that the artisan drafted parallel guide lines on the face of the dressed stone but these were not cut until after the

<sup>1</sup> The first publication of this inscription was by I. Ben-Zevi, "A Samaritan Inscription from Kfar Qalil", *J.P.O.S.*, x (1930), 222-6. It is found also in I. Ben-Zevi, *Sefer Hashomronim* (= *SH*), 1970 edn., Pl. 10 and p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> For example, cf. Cambridge MS. Add. 1846, Cambridge MS. Add. 713, and Rylands Samaritan MS. I.

<sup>3</sup> On local styles see *SMP* and see below.

<sup>4</sup> *QIS*, Pl. 21 and 22. See also *GMAW* for what Turner calls the bilineal effect. This feature on papyrus is not dissimilar to what we see on Samaritan relief inscriptions.



letters had been released, for, while the letters are suspended from lines with an even top margin and a wider bottom margin, some letters overlap the dividing baulks. On the Kfar Qalil inscription,<sup>1</sup> *lamed*, *samech*, and *nun* overlap the top baulk and *samech* also overhangs the lower baulk. On Baillet's inscription no. 2,<sup>2</sup> not only do *lamed*, *nun* and *samech* overlap the baulk, we can also see that the bottom of *samech* is not separated from the baulk, and, in another instance, *resh* is not released from the stone at the top and is joined to its preceding letter at the bottom. Sobernheim's reproductions of the Damascus relief inscriptions<sup>3</sup> show us that *nun* was not separated from the baulk but *lamed* was always cut off. These details allow us to perceive how the stone was cut. We may also deduce that efforts to compress the letters laterally were not always successful; the craftsman may have been forced to add an extra line in Nablus synagogue inscription no. 6,<sup>4</sup> which could account for the rather narrow lower line.

The relief inscription seems to have had one advantage over the engraved inscription despite the apparently more difficult problem of execution. This advantage was that, for all the problems of orthomorphism, the relief inscription overall gave a better impression of the appearance of the letters if they were to be cut in imitation of manuscript forms. It was possible on the relief inscriptions to indicate and imitate the wedged serifs at the foot of *kaph*, *mem*, *nun* and *pe* and the solidity of the head of *lamed*.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the tendency to use parallel lines and the very nature of the stone worked to suppress the true nature of the swollen points of the letter, which in manuscript were the points at which the writing instrument retraced its course in looping or adding strokes. The result is that stone relief letters are unable to reproduce the ductus of written letters on membrane

<sup>1</sup> *SH*, Pl. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *DIS*, Pl. 2.

<sup>3</sup> M. Sobernheim, "Samaritanische Inschriften aus Damascus", *Mitteilungen und Nachrichten des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, (1902), pp. 70-80 (= *SID*). Some of the inscriptions are to be found conveniently in J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans* (Philadelphia, 1907), Pl. 7, 9, 11, 12. Some of Musil's duplication of Sobernheim's work is also found in Montgomery.

<sup>4</sup> *QIS*, Pl. 22.

<sup>5</sup> This is exemplified in *SID*, Figs. 7 and 8, inscriptions II and III.

and they have the frozen appearance of a monumental style. However, this is still rather different from the monumental style of the engraved inscriptions in which neither ductus or shape is like the written letter.

On engraved inscriptions craftsmen do not seem to have been consistent in carving lines to separate lines of writing, though they might well have marked the surface of the stone with some erasable guide lines.<sup>1</sup> As we will demonstrate later, carved guide lines had their own effect on the writing of *lamed*, and they may have been avoided for that reason. It is clear from the engraved inscriptions that the cutting of the chisel into stone imposed a different sort of constraint from that in carving the relief inscriptions. Letters are close to the proportions that they have in manuscript, but their shapes are different and they have characteristics of their own which inhibit comparisons with either the manuscript forms or the relief inscriptions. In manuscript, the transversal of 'aleph is not a straight line but a curve, for where the upper right and lower left legs joined the transversal, the scribal pen did not make acute-angled movements but looped the joins. As a result the transversal curves in some measure, greater or smaller, at these junctures.<sup>2</sup> The resultant shape is an elongated and oblique S. This curved form does not occur on the stone inscriptions whether engraved or in relief: the transversal of 'aleph is always a straight line.<sup>3</sup> While the relief inscriptions can show a thickening at the left joint, even if the leg is acute-angled to the transversal, on the engraved inscriptions a different solution is found to the problem of representing this looping movement. Instead of a thickening of the joint, the transversal is projected to the left of its junction with the left foot. This is demonstrated by an examination of the chisel marks on the Kfar Bilu inscription<sup>4</sup> or it may be seen

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the plate of the Leeds Decalogue inscription in J. Bowman, "The Leeds Samaritan Decalogue Inscription", *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, vi, no. 8 (1951), 567-75 (= *LSDI*), with the Palestine Museum and Sychar inscriptions also presented there.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the plates in *SMP* for a handy source of reference.

<sup>3</sup> This statement holds true even of the relief inscriptions where attempts are made to copy manuscript forms.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pl. 12, *SH*, especially lines 1 and 2.

in the wedges at the transversal projection on the Samaritan Decalogue inscription 12 of Strugnell and Purvis.<sup>1</sup> On the first three lines of this latter inscription one sees that the transversal has been cut first, it has been thickened with wedges by gouging at each end and then the legs have been cut to join the transversal at the point of gouging, that is where the scribe would have changed the direction of his movement.

Thus, we have a monumental form which is in imitation of the written form but which is unique. A corollary of this examination of 'aleph is to indicate the dangers of considering the point of juncture of the left foot and the transversal as necessarily a chronological characteristic rather than a feature of the cutting of the inscription.<sup>2</sup> This point may be emphasised since we have shown elsewhere that the chronological indicators in 'aleph tend to be the movements of the right legs and their inclination to each other.<sup>3</sup>

One must note other features of the monumental style, which, while not exhaustive in total, round out the picture of masonry scripts which are rather different from each other and from manuscript.

In manuscript majuscule an important chronological referent is the proportion of the crowns of *mem*, *kaph* and *shin*, to the remainder of the letter.<sup>4</sup> In more recent specimens of the majuscule, the proportional size of the crown is less than in older specimens. Moreover, the bases of the vertical strokes of the crown thicken as the looping movements of the calamus become a dominant feature of each letter rather than a suppressed feature. In some examples of the later majuscule the looping is so marked that the crown is reduced in profile to a saw-tooth. This indicator barely appears in the stone inscriptions, and then there is a clear distinction between the relief inscriptions and the engraved inscriptions. In the engraved inscriptions the crowns of the letters named tend not to show a thickening at the base but, instead, the prongs of the crown are wedge-shaped at their

<sup>1</sup> *DIIM*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *PSIT*, p. 121, where Purvis suggests that this junction is a later form. However, this observation is contradicted by his own note that the form does occur in some early inscriptions.

<sup>3</sup> *SMP*.

<sup>4</sup> See the discussion of this point in *SMP*.

extremities, i.e., exactly reversing what is found on the manuscript forms. This wedging is shown with clarity in the plate of the Samaritan Decalogue Inscription 12,<sup>1</sup> but can be detected in almost every published plate of an engraved Samaritan inscription.

The relief inscriptions show more "life" and movement in letter-form than in the engraved inscriptions. The parallel lines of the relief inscriptions tend to break down when representing the crowns of these letters so that the base is at least thicker than the vertical strokes. However, the saw-tooth appearance is found in only one *Nablus* inscription, namely Strugnell's inscription no. 5.<sup>2</sup> This cannot be much earlier than the late sixteenth century, the period when Samaritan scribal traditions underwent substantial change. Strugnell's inscription no. 6,<sup>3</sup> which is about a century later, shows none of the saw-toothing of the crowns of letters, though in manuscript saw-toothing was common by the early fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

A further feature of the monumental style is the lack of ligaturing in *vav*. In the manuscript *vav* the scribe joined the oblique cross-members with what would be clover-loops, if one exaggerated the strokes. The inscriptions sometimes attempt to portray the form of this ligaturing, by noting in the stone a connection between the left transversal arm of *vav* and the upper fulcrum. One sees this, for example, on such engraved inscriptions as the *Nablus Decalogue* 12, line 5<sup>5</sup>; the *Ustinow* inscription, line 4<sup>6</sup>; the *Strugnell* inscription 1, lines 1 and 2<sup>7</sup>; and the *Sychar* inscription, line 4.<sup>8</sup> On the whole, these engraved inscriptions show the shape of the letter but not the

<sup>1</sup> *DIIM*, p. 89. See especially the wedging on *mem* and *shin* in inscription Strugnell 1.

<sup>2</sup> *QIS*, Pl. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Pl. 22.

<sup>4</sup> An interesting demonstration of the different treatment of the crowns of *shin*, *mem*, *pe* and *kaph*, in the engraved and in the relief inscriptions is to be found in Spoer's presentation, *NSI*. His relief inscriptions 9, 10, 11 and 12, appear quite differently from the engraved inscriptions. <sup>5</sup> *DIIM*, p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> *IS*, Fig. 8. This inscription is reprinted in *SIEC*, Pl. 6, and in the *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society Reader*, i (Jerusalem, 1965), 238-46, Pl. 27.

<sup>7</sup> *QIS*, Pl. 19. This *vav* should be compared with that on the deed of sale on Pl. xxx of MS. Chamberlain Warren CW2484. Cf., R. T. Anderson, *Revue Biblique*, lxxix (1972). Such a comparison leaves no doubt about the imitation of the literary ductus. <sup>8</sup> *SH*, Pl. 11, or *LSDI*, facing p. 569.

ductus, and they do not clarify the point that this connection represents a ligature. This can be demonstrated on the first inscription of Strugnell,<sup>1</sup> line 2, in the word *kmwḳha* where the left stroke is angled to the central oblique with its upper fulcrum, but the right stroke angles from the transversal at 85°/95° with no apparent ligature relationship to the fulcrum or left stroke. This structure would indicate a form influenced by a knowledge of the manuscript form of the letter, but with a special regard to the nature of the stone on which the letter was cut, namely a masonry form. In some of the relief inscriptions the special characteristic deriving from the masonry are demonstrated with clarity. Thus, in Baillet's second inscription, line 5,<sup>2</sup> one sees *vav* in which the left and right arms form a continuous line as a transversal to the centre line. This same feature is to be found in Strugnell's fifth and sixth inscriptions<sup>3</sup> and appears in Spoer<sup>4</sup> nos. 9, 10, 11, 12. The predominance of this feature in the forms of *vav* on the Kfar Qalil inscription, in an era long after ligaturing is well attested in manuscripts, would verify that we are dealing with a masonry form of the letter. It is not possible to describe the evolution of *vav* without taking account of the difference between the masonry and manuscript forms.<sup>5</sup>

One final point should be made about the effect of the material on the nature of the writing. In manuscript majuscule it is important to observe the altitude of *lamed* and *shin* in each line. They tend to be elevated letters written on a different alignment from other letters. The base of *lamed* frequently lies at the same height as the top of other letters, so that the top of *lamed* reaches up to be the same height as the top of *nun*. The crown of *shin* is of a height with the tops of other letters, but the base is only half way to bases of these other letters. *Lamed* is a useful indicator of the *genre* or type of manuscript majuscule since it changes its altitude according to the *genre*<sup>6</sup> and the epoch. However, on the inscriptions, one is unable to rely on the altitude of *lamed* for information about *genre* as it

<sup>1</sup> QIS, Pl. 19.

<sup>2</sup> DIS, Pl. II.

<sup>3</sup> QIS, Pl. 21 and 22.

<sup>4</sup> NSI, Pl. 4 and 5.

<sup>5</sup> Purvis, *SPSS*, p. 32, attempts to bring the masonry and manuscript forms into one developmental sequence without drawing the necessary distinctions.

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion of this point cf. *SMP*.

does not react in the same way as in the manuscripts. In the Ustinow inscription<sup>1</sup> and two of the Decalogue inscriptions<sup>2</sup> *lamed* is shown at its normal elevated inclination to other letters. In other engraved inscriptions where there are marked lines as guides for the mason, *lamed* is lowered to be equal in size to the other letters, its base being equal in altitude to the base of other letters.<sup>3</sup> The guiding criterion here seems to be neither *genre* nor chronology, but the method of drafting. In the relief inscriptions, as noted, the top of *lamed* may breach the guide lines between baulks, but the breach is always small, for the baulks themselves are not wide enough to encompass the whole letter, which is what would be necessary if the relief inscriptions were to treat *lamed* as an elevated letter as it appears in the manuscripts. Thus, in the relief inscriptions, *lamed* tends to be similar in size and elevation to other letters. In this circumstance it is difficult, if not impossible, to decide whether the altitude of *lamed* on the Damascus<sup>4</sup> reliefs is merely a product of the relief form of the inscription, or whether it is a product of the Damascus *genre*.<sup>5</sup> It may be easier to comment on the form of *lamed* on Baillet's inscription 1.<sup>6</sup>

We should not leave this section without reminding ourselves that letters in engraved inscriptions may also be written in imitation of the literary forms, though the result is rather different from that produced in the relief inscriptions. Unfortunately, we do not have manuscripts contemporary with the older Samaritan inscriptions for comparison, but we may well find that the masonry forms included imitations of literary forms as early as our oldest extant inscription. One criterion for such

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 40, n.4.

<sup>2</sup> *LSDI* and *DIIM*.

<sup>3</sup> An apparent exception is found in the Leeds Samaritan Decalogue inscription, where one of the two *lameds* on the fragment cuts the upper guide lines. However, the body of this letter is lowered to the full width of the lines and we must count it as supporting the conclusions reached. The second *lamed* on the fragment does not cut the guide lines. I am indebted to Professor R. T. Anderson for a photograph of the inscription published as Strugnell 1. This photograph allows us to see very faint guide lines drawn "Greek style", i.e., not meant to be seen. On line 2 the first *nun* is totally within the guide lines. The second *nun* blocks the upper line. All other letters are totally within the lines.

<sup>4</sup> *SID*, Figs. 7 and 8.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed discussion see *SMP* and below.

<sup>6</sup> *DIS*, Pl. 1. The discussion follows in the section on local styles.

imitation, that we have been able to establish<sup>1</sup> is the use of an "ornamental" stroke at the foot of *mem*, *nun*, *kaph* and *pe* since this is not an organic development of the monumental form but seems to derive from the manuscript majuscule. The consensus of opinion is that the Salbit mosaic, the third Emmaus inscription and the Nebo (Siyagha) fragments<sup>2</sup> are antique, yet traces of this imitation are to be found in all of these scripts.<sup>3</sup> One additional form may be noted. On the Thessalonica inscriptions<sup>4</sup> *aleph* is found with the transversal and left foot joined without a projection of the transversal. The form is regarded as anomalous by Purvis,<sup>5</sup> who would prefer to see it as a medieval development since "This became the standard '*alef*' of medieval Samaritan inscriptions and manuscripts." It may well have been a manuscript form (as noted above) at the time of the writing of the Thessalonica inscription. Unfortunately, we have no way of examining this point further. A corollary of this point is that we must not only distinguish between the different monumental forms based on their drafting method, but we must also take cognizance of which monumental forms really are in imitation of manuscript. Unless such a distinction is made we may be misled into seeing such features as the foot of *kaph*, *mem*, *nun* and *pe* as a developing ornament which can serve as a chronological determinant.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Genres and the Craftsmen*

The preceding comments lead us naturally to the subject of local traditions of writing which are reflected in the ductus of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *SMP*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *SPSS*, Table VI and *SIS*, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> *SPSS*, loc. cit. Cf. *SIS*, Fig. 1. Instead of an upturned stroke the imitative effect is achieved by bending the base stroke of *kaph* and *nun*. Yonick notes that "The alphabets from Nebo and Imwas do not represent one writing of monumental type but rather a literary ductus transposed directly on to the stone". He does not indicate what he regards as the literary characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> *PSIT*, Purvis' transcription, line I, and B. Lifshitz and J. Schiby, "Une Synagogue Samaritaine à Thessalonique", *Revue Biblique*, lxxv (1968), 368-78, Pl. 35.

<sup>5</sup> *PSIT*, p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. R. Taylor, "A New Samaritan Inscription", *BASOR*, no. 81 (1941), 1-5. Taylor uses the "absence of ornamental strokes at the foot of *mem*, *nun* and *kaph*", as chronological referents (p. 5). W. F. Albright, in commenting on Taylor's discussion, notes that the Ustinow inscription "is a somewhat stiff form of the older cursive hand" (p. 6).

individual letters or even in the style of the whole alphabet. Since local traditions of writing also involve the questions of scribes or craftsmen/masons who carved the inscriptions, we must include these persons in this section of our study.

Students of Hebrew palaeography are well aware of the existence of *genres* or local styles of writing. Birnbaum's contents' table<sup>1</sup> exemplifies this point with its major classification of "types" under which he considers the local scripts either in their manifestation in manuscript or in inscriptions. Other scholars have identified local styles in other Semitic scripts such as the cuneiform of the third millennium B.C.<sup>2</sup> Local styles or genres in the Samaritan majuscule have not been widely noticed although the present writer has identified and described a Palestinian coastal genre,<sup>3</sup> a Nablus genre, an Egyptian genre<sup>4</sup> and a Damascus genre. Purvis<sup>5</sup> has suggested that some of the peculiarities of the Thessalonica inscription may be explained by the existence of a local tradition of writing. There is substantial evidence that there is a Damascus genre in the relief inscriptions, for Sobernheim's plates<sup>6</sup> present us with examples in which the characteristics of the Damascus genre are found within the limits of the constraints imposed by the stone. The acute angle of the letters in relation to the line of movement of the scribe's pen<sup>7</sup> is copied in the stone, the characteristics of *Beth* in the majuscule of the genre are present in the stone; the *lamed*, as noted above, must be excluded from the assessment, for we cannot decide whether it reflects the Damascus genre or the form of this letter as found on relief inscriptions. We do not have any sample of the Damascus genre in an engraved inscription, so we

<sup>1</sup> *HS*, vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Biggs, *op. cit.* p. 41. *GMAW*, p. 24. The same problem is relevant to Greek palaeography. <sup>3</sup> Cf., *SMP*, for details and below p. 53, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> A good, unpublished specimen of this genre is the genizah fragment Cambridge TS 16.317, which has some interesting features. There are not really enough extant Egyptian texts to define the Egyptian genre as clearly as we may define the Damascus genre.

<sup>5</sup> *PSIT*, p. 123. Purvis' views would seem to be verified by Emanuel Tov's proof that the Thessalonica text draws on a Greek version of the Pentateuch, but probably a Samaritanized text. Cf. "Une Inscription Grecque d'origine Samaritaine trouvée à Thessalonique", *Revue Biblique*, lxxxix (1974), 394-9.

<sup>6</sup> *SID*, pp. 73, 74, 75, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *SMP* for details.



do not know whether that genre carried over to this type of cutting. However, we have incised inscriptions from Gaza,<sup>1</sup> Es-Sindiāne and Yavneh<sup>2</sup> which seem to betray characteristics of the coastal Palestinian genre. Unfortunately the plates and photographs available for examination are not good enough to make the evidence unequivocal. Nor do we have a full description of the coastal genre which is comparable with that of the Damascus genre<sup>3</sup>—most of our evidence relates to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, especially to the locality of Zerifin. Within these limits it is apparent that *lamed* in Gaza inscriptions 2, 3 and 4<sup>4</sup> is at an intermediate stage between the raised Nablus *lamed* and the lowered Damascus *lamed* (bearing in mind the previous discussion about the relationship of *lamed* to the guide lines on the stone; there are none on the Gaza inscriptions). Although *mem* is engraved in a literary ductus,<sup>5</sup> so that the crown is not flat-based but looped, *shin* is flat-based in the coastal literary style.<sup>6</sup> *Het*, in the word 'eḥad' seems to have an extended fulcrum in the manner of the coastal genre.<sup>8</sup>

One further inscription must be considered representing the coastal genre. This is the inscription from Nablus published by Baillet.<sup>9</sup> Although this was not found on the coast, nor have we any evidence to suggest that it was transported from the coast, it has stylistic features of the coastal genre. Amongst these we must note the shape of the fulcrum on *hē*, especially the additional fourth leg<sup>10</sup> to *hē* (line 7, last word) and the unusual proportions of the crown of *mem* (line 1, 2) to the rest of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. R. Taylor, "Samaritan Inscription from Gaza", *JPOS*, xvi (1936), 131-7 (= *SIF*), and Clermont Ganneau, "Inscription Samaritaine de Gaza et Inscriptions Grecques De Bersabée", *RB*, xv (1906), 84-91 (= *ISG*).

<sup>2</sup> S. Schröder, "Die Samaritanische Inschrift von es-Sindiāne", *ZDPV*, xxxi (1908), 249-53. Cf. *SH*, p. 101, n. 13 and J. Kaplan, "A Samaritan Synagogue Inscription from Yavneh"; I. Ben-Zevi, "Notes of the Yavneh Inscription"; Z. Ben-Haim, "The Samaritan Inscription from Yavneh", *BIES Reader*, i. 232-7.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *SMP* for details.

<sup>4</sup> *SIG*, Pl. vii, vii a & b.

<sup>5</sup> While we cannot testify to Taylor's dating (*SIG*, p. 136), there is no doubt that he is correct in pointing to the imitation of a literary ductus in these inscriptions.

<sup>6</sup> *SMP*, the discussion of *shin*.

<sup>7</sup> *SIG*, Pl. vii a.

<sup>8</sup> *SMP*, discussion of *het*.

<sup>9</sup> *DIS*, the first inscription and Pl. I.

<sup>10</sup> *SMP*, for a discussion of this point.

letter.<sup>1</sup> Now this inscription was cut in honour of Abraham b. Berakhah of Gerar, i.e. who came from Gerar but was living at Nablus.<sup>2</sup> In view of the fact that the style of the inscription is coastal, and that Abraham was of the Levitical, perhaps priestly, lineage and probably a skilled scribe,<sup>3</sup> it is quite probable that he drafted the inscription for an artisan to cut. We have shown elsewhere<sup>4</sup> that a scribe could transport his genre with him from his birthplace to a new home. This inscription raises the question of the drafting and cutting methods used by the Samaritans. The Damascus inscriptions, as we have noted, are indubitably in the style of the Damascus manuscripts of the period, and we must expect them to have been drafted on to the stone by an exponent of that style of writing which was acquired by long and careful practice in and of calligraphy.<sup>5</sup> The actual cutting of the Damascus reliefs must have been undertaken by a skilled craftsman, for it is doubtful whether anyone but a practiced stonemason could have dressed the stones in the way that they are found. This same method of working, drafting by a skilled scribe and execution by a practised artisan, may not have been uncommon, and, where this has been done and can be shown to have been done, it may not be too difficult to evaluate the various factors which make epigraphic comparisons different from manuscript palaeography. However, there are occasions when we may suspect that the scribe served as his own lapidary while at other times we may suspect that the artisan served as

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> *DIS*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> See the description of the family in A. F. Von Gall, *Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner*, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> *SMP*.

<sup>5</sup> On training in calligraphy cf. Z. Ben Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic amongst the Samaritans*, ii (Jerusalem, 1957), 319 ff. In addition to the discussion there, one should note the evidence of B.L. MS. Harley 5514. This manuscript is a calendar for 995 A.H. = 1688 A.D. (despite the entry in Margoliouth's catalogue "Prob. XVIth cent.") and, in the fashion of other such calendars, blank pages interleave the calendar. In this manuscript these have been utilized by trainee scribes to practice their 'aleph-bet. At first examination it was difficult to be certain that more than one hand was involved, but careful scrutiny showed that several persons had been practicing the 'aleph-bet. (In each sequence one letter had been omitted: perhaps there was some superstition about writing the whole alphabet repeatedly.) The practice seems to have been rigorous, apparently aimed at producing some degree of uniformity in writing.

his own scribe with results that can only be regarded as unique for a given occasion, and, hence, not admissible into a palaeographic discussion.<sup>1</sup> The appearance of characteristics of the coastal Palestinian genre in some of the Gaza inscriptions as noted, yet their poor execution<sup>2</sup>, would point to their having been engraved by the hand of a scribe or bookman rather than by a stonemason. There are two clues which lead us to this conclusion. The first is that on inscription 332543 (Pl. VIIA) the engraver was unable to incise vertical or horizontal lines to mark the sections of his work. Instead, the lines are curved or misaligned. (The engraver may have envisaged these as borders for his inscription and marked them out with a tool in punctilinear fashion. Their irregularity may be the reason why he never completed the cutting.) Second, the errors of quotation in the inscription are not the errors of a careless workman copying a text<sup>3</sup> but the errors of a Samaritan who knew the Samaritan version of the Torah and spelled as he pronounced the words in drafting from memory.<sup>4</sup> The third clue is the literary rather than the masonry form of some of the letters. All these factors would lead us to conclude that we are dealing with inscriptions in the Gaza series which are of the type in which the execution is so variable because of the lack of skill in incising on the part of the scribe that we cannot rely upon these inscriptions to represent their genre, era, masonry type or the individual scribe's normal script.

A contrary situation would seem to apply to an amulet published by Kaplan<sup>5</sup> on which the workmanship would appear to be that of a skilled metalworker, with neatly incised letters

<sup>1</sup> On this point see *SMP*.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *SIG, en passant*, repeatedly assumes that a careless stonemason has been responsible for some of the peculiarities of the inscriptions. We doubt if this is so, for the reasons stated in the text.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Was this inscription written, perhaps, by one who knew the Greek tradition of manuscripts, of not using vertical markers? Cf. *GMAW*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> On the problems of Samaritan pronunciation and its possible effects on cutting an inscription from memory, cf. Z. Ben-Hayyim, *Studies in the Traditions of the Hebrew Language : The Importance of the Samaritan Tradition to the History of Hebrew and Aramaic*, Madrid-Barcelona, 1954.

<sup>5</sup> J. Kaplan, "Two Samaritan Amulets", *IEJ*, xvii, no. 3 (1967), 158-62 (= *TSA*).

evenly spaced on a well-shaped amulet<sup>1</sup> with the letters not well differentiated from each other.<sup>2</sup> The inference is that the metalworker, not a calligrapher, was responsible for executing this script, and his lack of discrimination between some forms must lead us to suspect that they are not representative of their genre or era.

### *The Averaging Factor*

The foregoing discussion brings us to the crux of the whole problem of epigraphy and palaeography—what are we assessing when we look at a script, especially when there may be variation between the forms of letters written on one manuscript or inscription, let alone between scripts of different ages? Are we dealing only with the scribal idiosyncracies of individuals, or does each script reflect the state of literacy and literary technique in its own era? The writer has suggested elsewhere<sup>3</sup> (and it is also the tenor of the discussion preceding) that we are dependent upon establishing average forms to enable palaeographic comparisons to be made and that it is not unreasonable to establish average forms for the Samaritan majuscule script. However, in the matter of inscriptions *how* are such averages to be established and *what principles* apply to the process?

The method of establishing averages is so well attested that it would seem not to be worth further consideration, but it is clear from a study of numerous publications that the methods used are not always secure. In most epigraphic discussions of the Samaritan inscriptions the text is scrutinized to determine what are the significant chronological indicators in the changing of forms from era to era. Of the number of variants of each letter available in any given script, scholars select one or perhaps two or three as average and significant. The other forms, even if they vary a little are regarded as not significant and they are eliminated from the chronological reckoning. Scholars, then, present their samples for comparison on the basis of their own assessment of what is average and significant.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Fig. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 158, and see Pl. 36A.

<sup>3</sup> SMP.

<sup>4</sup> SPSS, Alphabet Tables following p. 147; SIS, pp. 210-1. Cf. also E. Testa, "La Mitica Rigenerazione Della Vita In Un Amuleto Samaritano-Cristiano Del IV Secolo", *Studii Biblicii Franciscani, Liber Annuus*, xxiii (1973), 286-317.

the sample presented may not be adequate. The reproduction of characters may not be accurate in that details of the structure of letters such as a thickening of a stroke, a wedge or the like, which are not always regarded as significant, may be omitted.<sup>1</sup> In numerous publications sample forms presented are really only an approximation to the true shape of the character as it is engraved, in themselves an averaging of what is taken to be average.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, when only one letter is presented as a sample, it might be wiser to present fuller documentation of the other forms of the letter in the script<sup>3</sup> as scholars might regard a degree of variation as significant. Despite these problems, such sample scripts, amplified by the use of photographs, remain the best way of establishing averages for comparison.

The principles governing the selection of material to be presented in the averaging process have been established in part above. By inference, we have established the fundamental principle that palaeographical sequences which we wish to promote as a norm/average should not include material that is skewed from our norm/average. We have also inferred a principle that some forms of skewing may be of quite regular occurrence. Local genres, imitations of a literary ductus, and the differences in letter forms which result from different techniques of cutting relief and engraved inscriptions are known skewing factors; we can, therefore, cope with them and minimize their effects. On the other hand, we would have to exclude from any epigraphic sequence a script which was so badly executed that it would represent an uncontrollable skewing from the average.

There is one final factor which needs some consideration. We have shown elsewhere<sup>4</sup> that the Samaritans, like the Jews,

<sup>1</sup> Testa (loc. cit.) does not show the lower serif on *kaph* and *mem* in the E1 Ma inscription, yet these are significant factors.

<sup>2</sup> A comparison of the forms of the Bir Yakub inscription (Decalogue inscription 5) as found in Spoer, *NSI*, with L. H. Vincent's drawing in "Puits de Jacob ou de la Samaritaine", *Revue Biblique*, lxxv (1958), 565-6, Pl. 15/3, would leave one wondering whether this was the same inscription. Some of the forms in *NSI* are mere averages of the morphology of the characters.

<sup>3</sup> Purvis' presentation of 'aleph in the Leeds Decalogue inscription can scarcely be said to be adequate in view of the variations thereof. Cf. *SPSS*, Table IV.

<sup>4</sup> *SMP*.

maintained special traditions for writing sacred texts. Not all of these traditions now remain and we can no longer identify many of them. One example that has been identified is the use of some minuscule letters in phylactery writing.<sup>1</sup> Another such tradition is the use of a carefully written majuscule for the Pentateuch text, and a rather different script for the deed of sale written at the same time.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Jewish coin script preserved archaic features for ideological reasons testifies to the existence of typological features on a wider scale, and it raises the question of the possibility of parallel features among the Samaritans. In fine, are there any typological features which might be reflected in Samaritan epigraphy? This is a question which cannot be answered with real certainty until each and every inscription has been handled, to eliminate the ambiguities that arise in published impressions of inscriptions. However, there is good reason to suspect that there is a typological factor which affects Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions. It is apparent that the feature of columnar writing,<sup>3</sup> which is found in many Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts, is also echoed in the Decalogue inscriptions. In this technique the text is carefully arranged to make identical words or the same letter fall beneath each other on succeeding lines. A related technique is that of detaching the last letter, or letters, from the body of the last word in a line, to write the detached letters at the left-hand edge of a text to even up a margin.<sup>4</sup> Both these customs are found in Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions of quite disparate eras, and, since the techniques are not widely distributed in Samaritan inscriptions, we must suggest a typology.

In Decalogue inscription no. 12<sup>5</sup> it can be seen that the following letters are separated from their parent words to provide an even left-hand margin: the *yad* of *pny*, line 2; the 'aleph of *lšw*', line 4; the *tav* of *hšbt*, line 5. The words *l'* are written twice in column on lines 7 and 8, space being left on the lines to produce an alignment between these words and the

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> *SMP*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *CJRL* I, p. XX for a more detailed description of this "columnization".

<sup>4</sup> The author described this and other Samaritan "masoretic" practices in a paper delivered at the *SOTS* Conference at Cambridge in 1977.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *QIS* for a transcript and *DIIM* for a photograph.

'aleph of 't on line 6, and of the letter *tav*, lines 6, 7, 8. Lines 8, 9, 10 provide a three-column of *lamed* and lines 7, 8, 9, 10, a four-column of 'aleph and *tav*. On the Bir Yakub inscription (Decalogue inscription no. 5)<sup>1</sup> the word *l'*, line 2, is split to allow the 'aleph to fall in line with the 'aleph of *l'* on line 1. Likewise, *mem*, lines 6 and 7, are in line, but this last case may be fortuitous since there is no evidence of arrangement. The al-Hadra mosque inscription (Decalogue inscription 3)<sup>2</sup> shows a careful columnar alignment of *lamed*, lines 5, 6 and 7, and of *kaph*, at the end of lines 4, 5 and 6.

On the Leeds Decalogue inscription (Decalogue inscription 1)<sup>3</sup> the letters (T) *hmd* on lines 15, 16, are columnized. If Alt<sup>4</sup> and Strugnell<sup>5</sup> are correct that Alt's inscription 1<sup>6</sup> was part of the Leeds inscription, then we can see from Alt's transcription of the text that the columnar effect was deliberate. Though the Gaza Decalogue (Decalogue inscription 10)<sup>7</sup> is of a rather different nature (see below) it still has the feature of the 'aleph of *l'*, line 2, being well detached to form an even margin. These features of the manuscript form on the Decalogue inscriptions lead one to suspect that there was a tradition that Decalogues should be engraved and that they should imitate a literary structure. At times this imitation might even appear to preserve the arrangement of the text on the manuscript page in stone, though whether this is fortuitous or a deliberate act is not yet established.<sup>8</sup> If this be so, we must expect that the forms of the earliest Decalogue inscriptions would influence the later Decalogue inscriptions. Thus, the strokes at the feet of *kaph*, *mem*, *pe*, *nun* (supra) may not only be in imitation of a literary ductus, but an imitation of the literary ductus as found on Decalogue

<sup>1</sup> See above p. 57, n. 2. Cf. *SH* with *SDI*, where plates of this inscription may be found.

<sup>2</sup> A good plate is Fig. 68, *HS*.

<sup>3</sup> Plates appear in *LSDI* and *SDI*.

<sup>4</sup> A. Alt, "Zu Den Samaritanischen Dekaloginschriften", *VT*, ii (1952), 273-6.

<sup>5</sup> *QIS*, p. 558.

<sup>6</sup> A. Alt, "Zwei Samaritanische Inschriften", *ZDPV*, xlviii (1925), 398-400.

<sup>7</sup> *ISG* for a plate.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the layout on the tablet with the layout of the Decalogue on the page of the manuscript. Cf. R. T. Andersen, "Pentateuch Samaritain CW 2484", *Revue Biblique*, lxxix (1972), Pl. 29. The arrangement of the Decalogue in manuscripts falls into several patterns. One of these is as shown in CW 2484.

inscriptions. Possible verification of this conclusion is to be found on the Leeds Decalogue inscription (= Decalogue inscription 1). The last line of this inscription, separated from the Decalogue proper by a deep groove, is not part of the Decalogue, but is drawn from Deuteronomy xxxiii/4. The custom of adding an extraneous verse after an inscription, but separated from it, is otherwise attested amongst the Samaritans.<sup>1</sup> The script forms of the extraneous line on Decalogue inscription 1 seem to be rather different from those of the Decalogue proper, lacking the imitation of the literary style. Perhaps these literary forms were considered necessary only for the Decalogue proper. We should, therefore, consider that there was a Decalogue type of epigraphy which persisted for some centuries. In the present writer's opinion we can identify such a type in the Decalogue inscriptions which were cut in the Nablus vicinity from the Byzantine era to the fourteenth century A.D.<sup>2</sup> Decalogue inscriptions cut in the Samaritan Diaspora (Yavneh, Gaza) do not conform to the Nablus typology, perhaps because of their remoteness from the Samaritan cultic centre.

Thus, the Decalogue inscriptions could face the epigrapher with yet another source of skewing, and they should be considered in this light.

In this discussion we have reviewed the methodological problems of Samaritan epigraphy and have suggested principles which could serve as guidelines in a new inquiry into the chronology of Samaritan inscriptions. In the light of the foregoing discussion of problems, diplomatic and epigraphic, it would seem that the results of Samaritan epigraphy are not as assured as they might hitherto have seemed to be. There would seem to be a reasonable case for a thoroughgoing review of Samaritan inscriptions. It remains to be seen whether these same problems have parallels in Hebrew epigraphy.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Montgomery, *op. cit.* Pl. 2.

<sup>2</sup> These dates depend on the dates ascribed by others to Decalogue inscriptions 1-12. When we can give a closer chronology to these inscriptions these dates will, almost certainly, need modification.